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*Edition de Luxe*

The Life and Works  
of  
Alfred Lord Tennyson

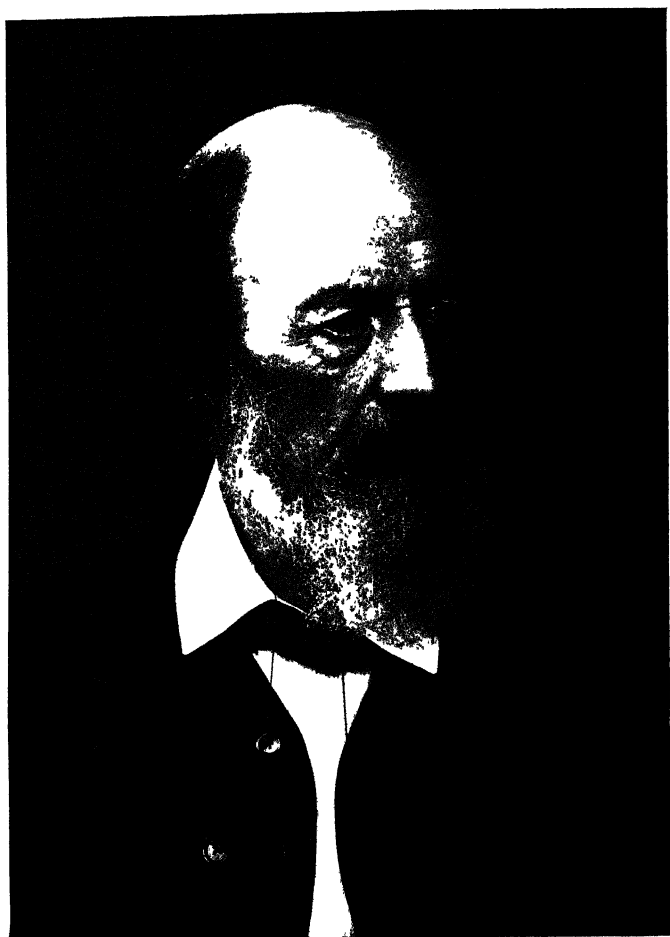
IN TWELVE VOLUMES

VOLUME XI









Walker & Bonnell ph. s.

*Alfred (Lord) Tennyson  
from the photograph by Barraud's L<sup>ds</sup>*





The Works of  
Alfred  
Lord Tennyson  
Poet Laureate

VOLUME VII

LONDON  
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*This Edition consists of Ten Hundred and Fifty Copies*

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## ILLUSTRATION

Alfred, Lord Tennyson, photogravure plate from the photograph by Barrauds Ltd. . . . . *Frontispiece*



,

BECKET



TO THE LORD CHANCELLOR,  
THE RIGHT HON. EARL OF SELBORNE

MY DEAR SELBORNE,

To you, the honoured Chancellor of our own day, I dedicate this dramatic memorial of your great predecessor ;—which, altho' not intended in its present form to meet the exigencies of our modern theatre, has nevertheless—for so you have assured me—won your approbation.

Ever yours,

TENNYSON.

## DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

HENRY II. (*son of the Earl of Anjou*).

THOMAS BECKET, *Chancellor of England, afterwards Archbishop of Canterbury.*

GILBERT FOLIOT, *Bishop of London.*

ROGER, *Archbishop of York.*

*Bishop of Hereford.*

HILARY, *Bishop of Chichester.*

JOCELYN, *Bishop of Salisbury.*

JOHN OF SALISBURY  
HERBERT OF BOSHAM } *friends of Becket.*

WALTER MAP, *reputed author of 'Goliath,' Latin poems against the priesthood.*

KING LOUIS OF FRANCE.

GEOFFREY, *son of Rosamund and Henry.*

GRIM, *a monk of Cambridge.*

SIR REGINALD FITZURSE

SIR RICHARD DE BRITO  
SIR WILLIAM DE TRACY } *the four knights of the King's household,*  
SIR HUGH DE MORVILLE } *enemies of Becket.*

DE BROC OF SALTWOOD CASTLE.

LORD LEICESTER.

PHILIP DE ELEMOSYNA.

TWO KNIGHT TEMPLARS.

JOHN OF OXFORD (*called the Swearer*).

ELEANOR OF AQUITAINE, *Queen of England (divorced from Louis of France).*

ROSAMUND DE CLIFFORD.

MARGERY.

*Knights, Monks, Beggars, etc.*

# BECKET

## PROLOGUE

*A Castle in Normandy. Interior of the Hall.  
Roofs of a City seen thro' Windows.*

HENRY and BECKET at chess

HENRY. So then our good Archbishop Theobald  
Lies dying.

BECKET. I am grieved to know as much.

HENRY. But we must have a mightier man  
than he  
For his successor.

BECKET. Have you thought of one?

HENRY. A cleric lately poison'd his own  
mother,  
And being brought before the courts of the  
Church,  
They but degraded him. I hope they whipt  
him.  
I would have hang'd him.



# BECKET

## PROLOGUE

BECKET. It is your move.

HENRY. Well—there. [*Moves.*

The Church in the pell-mell of Stephen's time  
Hath climb'd the throne and almost clutch'd the  
crown ;

But by the royal customs of our realm  
The Church should hold her baronies of me,  
Like other lords amenable to law.  
I'll have them written down and made the  
law.

BECKET. My liege, I move my bishop.

HENRY. And if I live,  
No man without my leave shall excommunicate  
My tenants or my household.

BECKET. Look to your king.

HENRY. No man without my leave shall  
cross the seas

To set the Pope against me—I pray your pardon.

BECKET. Well—will you move ?

HENRY. There. [*Moves.*

BECKET. Check—you move so wildly.

HENRY. There then ! [*Moves.*

BECKET. Why—there then, for you see my  
bishop  
Hath brought your king to a standstill. You  
are beaten.

HENRY (*kicks over the board*). Why, there then  
—down go bishop and king together.  
I loathe being beaten ; had I fixt my fancy  
Upon the game I should have beaten thee,  
But that was vagabond.

BECKET. Where, my liege? With Phryne,  
Or Lais, or thy Rosamund, or another?

HENRY. My Rosamund is no Lais, Thomas  
Becket;

And yet she plagues me too—no fault in her—  
But that I fear the Queen would have her life.

BECKET. Put her away, put her away, my  
liege!

Put her away into a nunnery!  
Safe enough there from her to whom thou art  
bound

By Holy Church. And wherefore should she seek  
The life of Rosamund de Clifford more  
Than that of other paramours of thine?

HENRY. How dost thou know I am not  
wedded to her?

BECKET. How should I know?

HENRY. That is my secret, Thomas.

BECKET. State secrets should be patent to the  
statesman

Who serves and loves his king, and whom the  
king

Loves not as statesman, but true lover and friend.

HENRY. Come, come, thou art but deacon,  
not yet bishop,

No, nor archbishop, nor my confessor yet.  
I would to God thou wert, for I should find  
An easy father confessor in thee.

BECKET. St. Denis, that thou shouldst not.  
I should beat

Thy kingship as my bishop hath beaten it.

HENRY. Hell take thy bishop then, and my  
kingship too !

Come, come, I love thee and I know thee, I  
know thee,

A doter on white pheasant-flesh at feasts,

A sauce-deviser for thy days of fish,

A dish-designer, and most amorous

Of good old red sound liberal Gascon wine :

Will not thy body rebel, man, if thou flatter it ?

BECKET. That palate is insane which cannot  
tell

A good dish from a bad, new wine from old.

HENRY. Well, who loves wine loves woman.

BECKET. So I do.

Men are God's trees, and women are God's  
flowers ;

And when the Gascon wine mounts to my head,

The trees are all the statelier, and the flowers

Are all the fairer.

HENRY. And thy thoughts, thy fancies ?

BECKET. Good dogs, my liege, well train'd, and  
easily call'd

Off from the game.

HENRY. Save for some once or twice,  
When they ran down the game and worried it.

BECKET. No, my liege, no !—not once—in  
God's name, no !

HENRY. Nay, then, I take thee at thy word  
—believe thee

The veriest Galahad of old Arthur's hall.

And so this Rosamund, my true heart-wife,

Not Eleanor—she whom I love indeed  
As a woman should be loved—Why dost thou  
smile

So dolorously ?

BECKET. My good liege, if a man  
Wastes himself among women, how should he  
love

A woman, as a woman should be loved ?

HENRY. How shouldst thou know that never  
hast loved one ?

Come, I would give her to thy care in England  
When I am out in Normandy or Anjou.

BECKET. My lord, I am your subject, not  
your——

HENRY. Pander.

God's eyes ! I know all that—not my purveyor  
Of pleasures, but to save a life—her life ;  
Ay, and the soul of Eleanor from hell-fire.  
I have built a secret bower in England, Thomas,  
A nest in a bush.

BECKET. And where, my liege ?

HENRY (*whispers*). Thine ear.

BECKET. That's lone enough.

HENRY (*laying paper on table*). This chart here  
mark'd '*Her Bower*,'

Take, keep it, friend. See, first, a circling wood,  
A hundred pathways running everyway,  
And then a brook, a bridge ; and after that  
This labyrinthine brickwork maze in maze,  
And then another wood, and in the midst  
A garden and my Rosamund. Look, this line——

# BECKET

## PROLOGUE

The rest you see is colour'd green—but this  
Draws thro' the chart to her.

BECKET. This blood-red line ?

HENRY. Ay ! blood, perchance, except thou  
see to her.

BECKET. And where is she ? There in her  
English nest ?

HENRY. Would God she were—no, here  
within the city.

We take her from her secret bower in Anjou  
And pass her to her secret bower in England.  
She is ignorant of all but that I love her.

BECKET. My liege, I pray thee let me hence :  
a widow

And orphan child, whom one of thy wild  
barons——

HENRY. Ay, ay, but swear to see to her in  
England.

BECKET. Well, well, I swear, but not to please  
myself.

HENRY. Whatever come between us ?

BECKET. What should come

Between us, Henry ?

HENRY. Nay—I know not, Thomas.

BECKET. What need then ? Well—whatever  
come between us. [Going.

HENRY. A moment ! thou didst help me to  
my throne

In Theobald's time, and after by thy wisdom  
Hast kept it firm from shaking ; but now I,  
For my realm's sake, myself must be the wizard

To raise that tempest which will set it trembling  
Only to base it deeper. I, true son  
Of Holy Church—no croucher to the Gregories  
That tread the kings their children under-heel—  
Must curb her ; and the Holy Father, while  
This Barbarossa butts him from his chair,  
Will need my help—be facile to my hands.  
Now is my time. Yet—lest there should be  
                    flashes

And fulminations from the side of Rome,  
An interdict on England—I will have  
My young son Henry crown'd the King of  
England,

That so the Papal bolt may pass by England,  
As seeming his, not mine, and fall abroad.  
I'll have it done—and now.

BECKET. Surely too young  
Even for this shadow of a crown ; and tho'  
I love him heartily, I can spy already  
A strain of hard and headstrong in him. Say,  
The Queen should play his kingship against thine !

HENRY. I will not think so, Thomas. Who shall crown him?  
Canterbury is dying.

BECKET.                   The next Canterbury.

HENRY. And who shall he be, my friend  
Thomas? Who?

BECKET. Name him ; the Holy Father will confirm him.

HENRY (*lays his hand on BECKET's shoulder*).  
Here!

# BECKET

## PROLOGUE

BECKET. Mock me not. I am not even a monk.

Thy jest—no more. Why—look—is this a sleeve

For an archbishop?

HENRY. But the arm within  
Is Becket's, who hath beaten down my foes.

BECKET. A soldier's, not a spiritual arm.

HENRY. I lack a spiritual soldier, Thomas—  
A man of this world and the next to boot.

BECKET. There's Gilbert Foliot.

HENRY. He! too thin, too thin.  
Thou art the man to fill out the Church robe;  
Your Foliot fasts and fawns too much for me.

BECKET. Roger of York.

HENRY. Roger is Roger of York.  
King, Church, and State to him but foils  
wherein

To set that precious jewel, Roger of York.  
No.

BECKET. Henry of Winchester?

HENRY. Him who crown'd Stephen—  
King Stephen's brother! No; too royal for me.  
And I'll have no more Anselms.

BECKET. Sire, the business  
Of thy whole kingdom waits me: let me go.

HENRY. Answer me first.

BECKET. Then for thy barren jest  
Take thou mine answer in bare commonplace—  
*Nolo episcopari.*

HENRY. Ay, but *Nolo*





## BECKET

## PROLOGUE

HENRY. My love for thee, and thine for me.  
ELEANOR.

Over ! the sweet summer closes,  
The reign of the roses is done ;  
Over and gone with the roses,  
And over and gone with the sun.

Here ; but our sun in Aquitaine lasts longer.  
I would I were in Aquitaine again—your north  
chills me.

Over ! the sweet summer closes,  
And never a flower at the close ;  
Over and gone with the roses,  
And winter again and the snows.

That was not the way I ended it first—but  
unsymmetrically, preposterously, illogically, out  
of passion, without art—like a song of the people.  
Will you have it ? The last Parthian shaft of a  
forlorn Cupid at the King's left breast, and all  
left-handedness and under-handedness.

And never a flower at the close,  
Over and gone with the roses,  
Not over and gone with the rose.

True, one rose will outblossom the rest, one rose  
in a bower. I speak after my fancies, for I am  
a Troubadour, you know, and won the violet at  
Toulouse ; but my voice is harsh here, not in  
tune, a nightingale out of season ; for marriage,  
rose or no rose, has killed the golden violet.

BECKET. Madam, you do ill to scorn wedded love.

ELEANOR. So I do. Louis of France loved me, and I dreamed that I loved Louis of France; and I loved Henry of England, and Henry of England dreamed that he loved me; but the marriage-garland withers even with the putting on, the bright link rusts with the breath of the first after-marriage kiss, the harvest moon is the ripening of the harvest, and the honeymoon is the gall of love; he dies of his honeymoon. I could pity this poor world myself that it is no better ordered.

HENRY. Dead is he, my Queen? What, altogether? Let me swear nay to that by this cross on thy neck. God's eyes! what a lovely cross! what jewels!

ELEANOR. Doth it please you? Take it and wear it on that hard heart of yours—there.

[*Gives it to him.*]

HENRY (*puts it on*). On this left breast before so hard a heart,  
To hide the scar left by thy Parthian dart.

ELEANOR. Has my simple song set you jingling? Nay, if I took and translated that hard heart into our Provençal facilities, I could so play about it with the rhyme——

HENRY. That the heart were lost in the rhyme and the matter in the metre. May we not pray you, Madam, to spare us the hardness of your facility?

# BECKET

## PROLOGUE

ELEANOR. The wells of Castaly are not wasted upon the desert. We did but jest.

HENRY. There's no jest on the brows of Herbert there. What is it, Herbert?

*Enter HERBERT OF BOSHAM*

HERBERT. My liege, the good Archbishop is no more.

HENRY. Peace to his soul!

HERBERT. I left him with peace on his face—that sweet other-world smile, which will be reflected in the spiritual body among the angels. But he longed much to see your Grace and the Chancellor ere he past, and his last words were a commendation of Thomas Becket to your Grace as his successor in the archbishoprick.

HENRY. Ha, Becket! thou rememberest our talk!

BECKET. My heart is full of tears—I have no answer.

HENRY. Well, well, old men must die, or the world would grow mouldy, would only breed the past again. Come to me to-morrow. Thou hast but to hold out thy hand. Meanwhile the revenues are mine. A-hawking, a-hawking! If I sit, I grow fat.

*[Leaps over the table, and exit.]*

BECKET. He did prefer me to the chancellorship,  
Believing I should ever aid the Church—

But have I done it? He commends me now  
From out his grave to this archbishoprick.

HERBERT. A dead man's dying wish should  
be of weight.

BECKET. *His* should. Come with me. Let  
me learn at full

The manner of his death, and all he said.

[*Exeunt* HERBERT and BECKET.

ELEANOR. Fitzurse, that chart with the red  
line—thou sawest it—her bower.

FITZURSE. Rosamund's?

ELEANOR. Ay—there lies the secret of her  
whereabouts, and the King gave it to his  
Chancellor.

FITZURSE. To this son of a London merchant  
—how your Grace must hate him.

ELEANOR. Hate him? as brave a soldier as  
Henry and a goodlier man: but thou—dost thou  
love this Chancellor, that thou hast sworn a  
voluntary allegiance to him?

FITZURSE. Not for my love toward him, but  
because he had the love of the King. How  
should a baron love a beggar on horseback, with  
the retinue of three kings behind him, out-  
royalling royalty? Besides, he help the King to  
break down our castles, for the which I hate him.

ELEANOR. For the which I honour him.  
Statesman not Churchman he. A great and  
sound policy that: I could embrace him for it:  
you could not see the King for the kinglings.

FITZURSE. Ay, but he speaks to a noble as

tho' he were a churl, and to a churl as if he were a noble.

ELEANOR. Pride of the plebeian !

FITZURSE. And this plebeian like to be Archbishop !

ELEANOR. True, and I have an inherited loathing of these black sheep of the Papacy. Archbishop ? I can see further into a man than our hot-headed Henry, and if there ever come feud between Church and Crown, and I do not then charm this secret out of our loyal Thomas, I am not Eleanor.

FITZURSE. Last night I followed a woman in the city here. Her face was veiled, but the back methought was Rosamund—his paramour, thy rival. I can feel for thee.

ELEANOR. Thou feel for me !—paramour—rival ! King Louis had no paramours, and I loved him none the more. Henry had many, and I loved him none the less—now neither more nor less—not at all ; the cup's empty. I would she were but his paramour, for men tire of their fancies ; but I fear this one fancy hath taken root, and borne blossom too, and she, whom the King loves indeed, is a power in the State. Rival !—ay, and when the King passes, there may come a crash and embroilment as in Stephen's time ; and her children—canst thou not—that secret matter which would heat the King against thee (*whispers him and he starts*). Nay, that is safe with me as with thyself : but canst thou not

—thou art drowned in debt—thou shalt have our love, our silence, and our gold—canst thou not—if thou light upon her—free me from her ?

FITZURSE. Well, Madam, I have loved her in my time.

ELEANOR. No, my bear, thou hast not. My Courts of Love would have held thee guiltless of love—the fine attractions and repulses, the delicacies, the subtleties.

FITZURSE. Madam, I loved according to the main purpose and intent of nature.

ELEANOR. I warrant thee ! thou wouldst hug thy Cupid till his ribs cracked—enough of this. Follow me this Rosamund day and night, whithersoever she goes ; track her, if thou canst, even into the King's lodging, that I may (*clenches her fist*)—may at least have my cry against him and her,—and thou in thy way shouldst be jealous of the King, for thou in thy way didst once, what shall I call it, affect her thine own self.

FITZURSE. Ay, but the young colt winced and whinnied and flung up her heels ; and then the King came honeying about her, and this Becket, her father's friend, like enough staved us from her.

ELEANOR. Us !

FITZURSE. Yea, by the Blessed Virgin ! There were more than I buzzing round the blossom—De Tracy—even that flint De Brito.

ELEANOR. Carry her off among you ; run in upon her and devour her, one and all of you ;

# BECKET

## PROLOGUE

make her as hateful to herself and to the King, as she is to me.

FITZURSE. I and all would be glad to wreak our spite on the rosefaced minion of the King, and bring her to the level of the dust, so that the King——

ELEANOR. Let her eat it like the serpent, and be driven out of her paradise.

## ACT I

### SCENE I.—BECKET'S HOUSE IN LONDON

*Chamber barely furnished. BECKET unrobing.*

HERBERT OF BOSHAM *and* SERVANT.

SERVANT. Shall I not help your lordship to  
your rest ?

BECKET. Friend, am I so much better than  
thyself

That thou shouldst help me ? Thou art wearied  
out

With this day's work, get thee to thine own bed.

Leave me with Herbert, friend. [*Exit* SERVANT.

Help me off, Herbert, with this—and this.

HERBERT. Was not the people's blessing as  
we past

Heart-comfort and a balsam to thy blood ?

BECKET. The people know their Church a  
tower of strength,

A bulwark against Throne and Baronage.

Too heavy for me, this ; off with it, Herbert !

HERBERT. Is it so much heavier than thy  
Chancellor's robe ?



# BECKET

ACT I

BECKET. No ; but the Chancellor's and the Archbishop's  
Together more than mortal man can bear.

HERBERT. Not heavier than thine armour at Thoulouse ?

BECKET. O Herbert, Herbert, in my chancellorship  
I more than once have gone against the Church.

HERBERT. To please the King ?

BECKET. Ay, and the King of kings,  
Or justice ; for it seem'd to me but just  
The Church should pay her scutage like the lords.

But hast thou heard this cry of Gilbert Foliot  
That I am not the man to be your Primate,  
For Henry could not work a miracle—  
Make an Archbishop of a soldier ?

HERBERT. Ay,  
For Gilbert Foliot held himself the man.

BECKET. Am I the man ? My mother, ere  
she bore me,  
Dream'd that twelve stars fell glittering out of  
heaven  
Into her bosom.

HERBERT. Ay, the fire, the light,  
The spirit of the twelve Apostles enter'd  
Into thy making.

BECKET. And when I was a child,  
The Virgin, in a vision of my sleep,  
Gave me the golden keys of Paradise. Dream,  
Or prophecy, that ?

HERBERT. Well, dream and prophecy both.

BECKET. And when I was of Theobald's household, once—

The good old man would sometimes have his jest—

He took his mitre off, and set it on me,  
And said, 'My young Archbishop — thou wouldst make

A stately Archbishop !' Jest or prophecy there ?

HERBERT. Both, Thomas, both.

BECKET. Am I the man ? That rang  
Within my head last night, and when I slept  
Methought I stood in Canterbury Minster,  
And spake to the Lord God, and said, 'O Lord,  
I have been a lover of wines, and delicate meats,  
And secular splendours, and a favourer  
Of players, and a courtier, and a feeder  
Of dogs and hawks, and apes, and lions, and  
lynxes.

Am I the man ?' And the Lord answer'd me,  
'Thou art the man, and all the more the man.'  
And then I asked again, 'O Lord my God,  
Henry the King hath been my friend, my brother,  
And mine uplifter in this world, and chosen me  
For this thy great archbishoprick, believing  
That I should go against the Church with him,  
And I shall go against him with the Church,  
And I have said no word of this to him :  
Am I the man ?' And the Lord answer'd me,  
'Thou art the man, and all the more the man.'  
And thereupon, methought, He drew toward me,

And smote me down upon the Minster floor.  
I fell.

HERBERT. God make not thee, but thy foes,  
fall.

BECKET. I fell. Why fall? Why did He  
smite me? What?

Shall I fall off—to please the King once more?  
Not fight—tho' somehow traitor to the King—  
My truest and mine utmost for the Church?

HERBERT. Thou canst not fall that way.  
Let traitor be;

For how have fought thine utmost for the  
Church,

Save from the throne of thine archbishoprick?  
And how been made Archbishop hadst thou told  
him,

'I mean to fight mine utmost for the Church,  
Against the King'?

BECKET. But dost thou think the King  
Forced mine election?

HERBERT. I do think the King  
Was potent in the election, and why not?  
Why should not Heaven have so inspired the  
King?

Be comforted. Thou art the man—be thou  
A mightier Anselm.

BECKET. I do believe thee, then. I am the  
man.

And yet I seem appall'd—on such a sudden  
At such an eagle-height I stand and see  
The rift that runs between me and the King.

I served our Theobald well when I was with him ;  
I served King Henry well as Chancellor ;  
I am his no more, and I must serve the Church.  
This Canterbury is only less than Rome,  
And all my doubts I fling from me like dust,  
Winnow and scatter all scruples to the wind,  
And all the puissance of the warrior,  
And all the wisdom of the Chancellor,  
And all the heap'd experiences of life,  
I cast upon the side of Canterbury—  
Our holy mother Canterbury, who sits  
With tatter'd robes. Laics and barons, thro'  
The random gifts of careless kings, have graspt  
Her livings, her advowsons, granges, farms,  
And goodly acres—we will make her whole ;  
Not one rood lost. And for these Royal customs,  
These ancient Royal customs—they *are* Royal,  
Not of the Church—and let them be anathema,  
And all that speak for them anathema.

HERBERT. Thomas, thou art moved too much.

BECKET. O Herbert, here  
I gash myself asunder from the King,  
Tho' leaving each, a wound ; mine own, a grief  
To show the scar for ever—his, a hate  
Not ever to be heal'd.

*Enter ROSAMUND DE CLIFFORD, flying from SIR  
REGINALD FITZURSE. Drops her veil.*

BECKET. Rosamund de Clifford !

ROSAMUND. Save me, father, hide me—they  
follow me—and I must not be known.

# BECKET

ACT I

BECKET. Pass in with Herbert there.

[*Exeunt ROSAMUND and HERBERT by side door.*]

*Enter FITZURSE*

FITZURSE. The Archbishop !

BECKET. Ay ! what wouldst thou, Reginald ?

FITZURSE. Why—why, my lord, I follow'd  
—follow'd one——

BECKET. And then what follows ? Let me  
follow thee.

FITZURSE. It much imports me I should  
know her name.

BECKET. What her ?

FITZURSE. The woman that I follow'd hither.

BECKET. Perhaps it may import her all as  
much

Not to be known.

FITZURSE. And what care I for that ?

Come, come, my lord Archbishop ; I saw that  
door

Close even now upon the woman.

BECKET. Well ?

FITZURSE (*making for the door*). Nay, let me  
pass, my lord, for I must know.

BECKET. Back, man !

FITZURSE. Then tell me who and what she is.

BECKET. Art thou so sure thou followedst  
anything ?

Go home, and sleep thy wine off, for thine eyes  
Glare stupid-wild with wine.

FITZURSE (*making to the door*). I must and will.  
I care not for thy new archbishoprick.

BECKET. Back, man, I tell thee ! What !  
Shall I forget my new archbishoprick  
And smite thee with my crozier on the skull ?  
'Fore God, I am a mightier man than thou.

FITZURSE. It well befits thy new arch-  
bishoprick  
To take the vagabond woman of the street  
Into thine arms !

BECKET. O drunken ribaldry !  
Out, beast ! out, bear !

FITZURSE. I shall remember this.

BECKET. Do, and begone !

[*Exit FITZURSE.*

[*Going to the door, sees DE TRACY.*

Tracy, what dost thou here ?

DE TRACY. My lord, I follow'd Reginald  
Fitzurse.

BECKET. Follow him out !

DE TRACY. I shall remember this  
Discourtesy. [*Exit.*

BECKET. Do. These be those baron-brutes  
That havock'd all the land in Stephen's day.  
Rosamund de Clifford.

*Re-enter ROSAMUND and HERBERT*

ROSAMUND. Here am I.

BECKET. Why here ?  
We gave thee to the charge of John of Salisbury,

# BECKET

ACT I

To pass thee to thy secret bower to-morrow.  
Wast thou not told to keep thyself from sight ?

ROSAMUND. Poor bird of passage ! so I was ;  
but, father,

They say that you are wise in winged things,  
And know the ways of Nature. Bar the bird  
From following the fled summer—a chink—he's  
out,

Gone ! And there stole into the city a breath  
Full of the meadows, and it minded me  
Of the sweet woods of Clifford, and the walks  
Where I could move at pleasure, and I thought  
Lo ! I must out or die.

BECKET. Or out *and* die.

And what hast thou to do with this Fitzurse ?

ROSAMUND. Nothing. He sued my hand.  
I shook at him.

He found me once alone. Nay—nay—I cannot

Tell you : my father drove him and his friends,  
De Tracy and De Brito, from our castle.

I was but fourteen and an April then.

I heard him swear revenge.

BECKET. Why will you court it  
By self-exposure ? flutter out at night ?

Make it so hard to save a moth from the fire ?

ROSAMUND. I have saved many of 'em. You  
catch 'em, so,

Softly, and fling them out to the free air.

They burn themselves *within*-door.

BECKET.

Our good John

Must speed you to your bower at once. The  
child

Is there already.

ROSAMUND. Yes—the child—the child—  
O rare, a whole long day of open field.

BECKET. Ay, but you go disguised.

ROSAMUND. O rare again !  
We'll baffle them, I warrant. What shall it be ?  
I'll go as a nun.

BECKET. No.

ROSAMUND. What, not good enough  
Even to play at nun ?

BECKET. Dan John with a nun,  
That Map, and these new railers at the Church  
May plaister his clean name with scurrilous  
rhymes !

No !

Go like a monk, cowling and clouding up  
That fatal star, thy Beauty, from the squint  
Of lust and glare of malice. Good night ! good  
night !

ROSAMUND. Father, I am so tender to all  
hardness !  
Nay, father, first thy blessing.

BECKET. Wedded ?

ROSAMUND. Father !

BECKET. Well, well ! I ask no more.  
Heaven bless thee ! hence !

ROSAMUND. O, holy father, when thou seest  
him next,  
Commend me to thy friend.



# BECKET

ACT I

BECKET.

What friend ?

ROSAMUND.

The King.

BECKET. Herbert, take out a score of armed  
men

To guard this bird of passage to her cage ;  
And watch Fitzurse, and if he follow thee,  
Make him thy prisoner. I am Chancellor yet.

[*Exeunt* HERBERT and ROSAMUND.]

Poor soul ! poor soul !

My friend, the King ! . . . O thou Great Seal  
of England,

Given me by my dear friend the King of England—  
We long have wrought together, thou and I—  
Now must I send thee as a common friend  
To tell the King, my friend, I am against him.  
We are friends no more : he will say that, not I.  
The worldly bond between us is dissolved,  
Not yet the love : can I be under him  
As Chancellor ? as Archbishop over him ?  
Go therefore like a friend slighted by one  
That hath climb'd up to nobler company.  
Not slighted—all but moan'd for : thou must go.  
I have not dishonour'd thee—I trust I have not ;  
Not mangled justice. May the hand that next  
Inherits thee be but as true to thee  
As mine hath been ! O, my dear friend, the  
King !

O brother !—I may come to martyrdom.

I am martyr in myself already.—Herbert !

HERBERT (*re-entering*). My lord, the town is  
quiet, and the moon

Divides the whole long street with light and shade.

No footfall—no Fitzurse. We have seen her home.

BECKET. The hog hath tumbled himself into some corner,  
Some ditch, to snore away his drunkenness  
Into the sober headache,—Nature's moral  
Against excess. Let the Great Seal be sent  
Back to the King to-morrow.

HERBERT. Must that be?  
The King may rend the bearer limb from limb.  
Think on it again.

BECKET. Against the moral excess  
No physical ache, but failure it may be  
Of all we aim'd at. John of Salisbury  
Hath often laid a cold hand on my heats,  
And Herbert hath rebuked me even now.  
I will be wise and wary, not the soldier  
As Foliot swears it.—John, and out of breath !

*Enter* JOHN OF SALISBURY

JOHN OF SALISBURY. Thomas, thou wast not  
happy taking charge  
Of this wild Rosamund to please the King,  
Nor am I happy having charge of her—  
The included Danaë has escaped again  
Her tower, and her Acrisius—where to seek ?  
I have been about the city.

BECKET. Thou wilt find her

# BECKET

ACT I

Back in her lodging. Go with her—at once—  
To-night—my men will guard you to the gates.  
Be sweet to her, she has many enemies.  
Send the Great Seal by daybreak. Both, good  
night !

## SCENE II

STREET IN NORTHAMPTON LEADING TO THE CASTLE

ELEANOR'S RETAINERS *and* BECKET'S RETAINERS *fighting*. *Enter ELEANOR and BECKET from opposite streets.*

ELEANOR. Peace, fools !

BECKET. Peace, friends ! what idle brawl is  
this ?

RETAINER OF BECKET. They said—her Grace's  
people—thou wast found—

Liars ! I shame to quote 'em—caught, my lord,  
With a wanton in thy lodging—Hell requite 'em !

RETAINER OF ELEANOR. My liege, the Lord  
Fitzurse reported this

In passing to the Castle even now.

RETAINER OF BECKET. And then they mock'd  
us and we fell upon 'em,

For we would live and die for thee, my lord,  
However kings and queens may frown on thee.

BECKET *to his* RETAINERS. Go, go—no more  
of this !

ELEANOR *to her* RETAINERS. Away !—(*Exeunt*  
RETAINERS) Fitzurse——

BECKET. Nay, let him be.

ELEANOR. No, no, my Lord Archbishop,  
'Tis known you are midwinter to all women,  
But often in your chancellorship you served  
The follies of the King.

BECKET. No, not these follies !

ELEANOR. My lord, Fitzurse beheld her in  
your lodging.

BECKET. Whom ?

ELEANOR. Well—you know—the minion,  
Rosamund.

BECKET. He had good eyes !

ELEANOR. Then hidden in the street  
He watch'd her pass with John of Salisbury  
And heard her cry 'Where is this bower of  
mine ?'

BECKET. Good ears too !

ELEANOR. You are going to the Castle,  
Will you subscribe the customs ?

BECKET. I leave that,  
Knowing how much you reverence Holy Church,  
My liege, to your conjecture.

ELEANOR. I and mine—  
And many a baron holds along with me—  
Are not so much at feud with Holy Church  
But we might take your side against the customs—  
So that you grant me one slight favour.

BECKET. What ?

ELEANOR. A sight of that same chart which  
Henry gave you  
With the red line—'her bower.'

# BECKET

ACT I

BECKET. And to what end ?

ELEANOR. That Church must scorn herself  
whose fearful Priest  
Sits winking at the license of a king,  
Altho' we grant when kings are dangerous  
The Church must play into the hands of kings ;  
Look ! I would move this wanton from his sight  
And take the Church's danger on myself.

BECKET. For which she should be duly  
grateful.

ELEANOR. True !  
Tho' she that binds the bond, herself should see  
That kings are faithful to their marriage vow.

BECKET. Ay, Madam, and queens also.

ELEANOR. And queens also !  
What is your drift ?

BECKET. My drift is to the Castle,  
Where I shall meet the Barons and my King.  
[Exit.

DE BROC, DE TRACY, DE BRITO,  
DE MORVILLE (*passing*)

ELEANOR. To the Castle ?

DE BROC. Ay !

ELEANOR. Stir up the King, the Lords !  
Set all on fire against him !

DE BRITO. Ay, good Madam !  
[Exeunt.

ELEANOR. Fool ! I will make thee hateful to  
thy King.

Churl ! I will have thee frighted into France,  
And I shall live to trample on thy grave.

## SCENE III

## THE HALL IN NORTHAMPTON CASTLE

*On one side of the stage the doors of an inner Council-chamber, half-open. At the bottom, the great doors of the Hall. ROGER ARCHBISHOP OF YORK, FOLIOT BISHOP OF LONDON, HILARY OF CHICHESTER, BISHOP OF HEREFORD, RICHARD DE HASTINGS (Grand Prior of Templars), PHILIP DE ELEEMOSYNA (the Pope's Almoner), and others. DE BROC, FITZURSE, DE BRITO, DE MORVILLE, DE TRACY, and other BARONS assembled—a table before them. JOHN OF OXFORD, President of the Council.*

*Enter BECKET and HERBERT OF BOSHAM*

BECKET. Where is the King ?

ROGER OF YORK. Gone hawking on the Nene,  
His heart so gall'd with thine ingratitude,  
He will not see thy face till thou hast sign'd  
These ancient laws and customs of the realm.  
Thy sending back the Great Seal madden'd him,  
He all but pluck'd the bearer's eyes away.  
Take heed, lest he destroy thee utterly.

BECKET. Then shalt thou step into my place  
and sign.

# BECKET

ACT I

ROGER OF YORK. Didst thou not promise  
Henry to obey  
These ancient laws and customs of the realm ?

BECKET. Saving the honour of my order—ay.  
Customs, traditions,—clouds that come and go ;  
The customs of the Church are Peter's rock.

ROGER OF YORK. Saving thine order ! But  
King Henry sware  
That, saving his King's kingship, he would grant  
thee

The crown itself. Saving thine order, Thomas,  
Is black and white at once, and comes to nought.  
O bolster'd up with stubbornness and pride,  
Wilt thou destroy the Church in fighting for it,  
And bring us all to shame ?

BECKET. Roger of York,  
When I and thou were youths in Theobald's  
house,  
Twice did thy malice and thy calumnies  
Exile me from the face of Theobald.  
Now I am Canterbury and thou art York.

ROGER OF YORK. And is not York the peer of  
Canterbury ?  
Did not Great Gregory bid St. Austin here  
Found two archbishopricks, London and York ?

BECKET. What came of that ? The first arch-  
bishop fled,  
And York lay barren for a hundred years.  
Why, by this rule, Foliot may claim the pall  
For London too.

FOLIOT. And with good reason too,

For London had a temple and a priest  
When Canterbury hardly bore a name.

BECKET. The pagan temple of a pagan Rome !  
The heathen priesthood of a heathen creed !  
Thou goest beyond thyself in petulancy !  
Who made thee London ? Who, but Canter-  
bury ?

JOHN OF OXFORD. Peace, peace, my lords !  
these customs are no longer  
As Canterbury calls them, wandering clouds,  
But by the King's command are written down,  
And by the King's command I, John of Oxford,  
The President of this Council, read them.

BECKET. Read !

JOHN OF OXFORD (*reads*). 'All causes of  
advowsons and presentations, whether between  
laymen or clerics, shall be tried in the King's  
court.'

BECKET. But that I cannot sign : for that  
would drag  
The cleric before the civil judgment-seat,  
And on a matter wholly spiritual.

JOHN OF OXFORD. 'If any cleric be accused of  
felony, the Church shall not protect him ; but he  
shall answer to the summons of the King's court  
to be tried therein.'

BECKET. And that I cannot sign.  
Is not the Church the visible Lord on earth ?  
Shall hands that do create the Lord be bound  
Behind the back like laymen-criminals ?  
The Lord be judged again by Pilate ? No !



JOHN OF OXFORD. 'When a bishoprick falls vacant, the King, till another be appointed, shall receive the revenues thereof.'

BECKET. And that I cannot sign. Is the  
King's treasury  
A fit place for the monies of the Church,  
That be the patrimony of the poor?

JOHN OF OXFORD. 'And when the vacancy is to be filled up, the King shall summon the chapter of that church to court, and the election shall be made in the Chapel Royal, with the consent of our lord the King, and by the advice of his Government.'

BECKET. And that I cannot sign: for that  
would make  
Our island-Church a schism from Christendom,  
And weight down all free choice beneath the  
throne.

FOLIOT. And was thine own election so  
canonical,  
Good father?

BECKET. If it were not, Gilbert Foliot,  
I mean to cross the sea to France, and lay  
My crozier in the Holy Father's hands,  
And bid him re-create me, Gilbert Foliot.

FOLIOT. Nay; by another of these customs  
thou  
Wilt not be suffer'd so to cross the seas  
Without the license of our lord the King.

BECKET. That, too, I cannot sign.

DE BROC, DE BRITO, DE TRACY, FITZURSE,  
DE MORVILLE, *start up—a clash of swords.*

Sign and obey !

BECKET. My lords, is this a combat or a council ?

Are ye my masters, or my lord the King ?  
Ye make this clashing for no love o' the customs  
Or constitutions, or whate'er ye call them,  
But that there be among you those that hold  
Lands reft from Canterbury.

DE BROC. And mean to keep them,  
In spite of thee !

LORDS (*shouting*). Sign, and obey the crown !

BECKET. The crown ? Shall I do less for  
Canterbury

Than Henry for the crown ? King Stephen gave  
Many of the crown lands to those that helpt him ;  
So did Matilda, the King's mother. Mark,  
When Henry came into his own again,  
Then he took back not only Stephen's gifts,  
But his own mother's, lest the crown should be  
Shorn of ancestral splendour. This did Henry.  
Shall I do less for mine own Canterbury ?

And thou, De Broc, that holdest Saltwood  
Castle——

DE BROC. And mean to hold it, or——

BECKET. To have my life.

DE BROC. The King is quick to anger ; if  
thou anger him,

We wait but the King's word to strike thee dead.

# BECKET

ACT I

BECKET. Strike, and I die the death of  
martyrdom ;  
Strike, and ye set these customs by my death  
Ringing their own death-knell thro' all the realm.

HERBERT. And I can tell you, lords, ye are  
all as like  
To lodge a fear in Thomas Becket's heart  
As find a hare's form in a lion's cave.

JOHN OF OXFORD. Ay, sheathe your swords,  
ye will displease the King.

DE BROC. Why down then thou ! but an he  
come to Saltwood,  
By God's death, thou shalt stick him like a calf !  
*[Sheathing his sword.]*

HILARY. O my good lord, I do entreat  
thee—sign.  
Save the King's honour here before his barons.  
He hath sworn that thou shouldst sign, and now  
but shuns

The semblance of defeat ; I have heard him say  
He means no more ; so if thou sign, my lord,  
That were but as the shadow of an assent.

BECKET. 'Twould seem too like the substance,  
if I sign'd.

PHILIP DE ELEEMOSYNA. My lord, thine ear !  
I have the ear of the Pope.  
As thou hast honour for the Pope our master,  
Have pity on him, sorely prest upon  
By the fierce Emperor and his Antipope.  
Thou knowest he was forced to fly to France ;  
He pray'd me to pray thee to pacify

Thy King ; for if thou go against thy King,  
Then must he likewise go against thy King,  
And then thy King might join the Antipope,  
And that would shake the Papacy as it stands.  
Besides, thy King swore to our cardinals  
He meant no harm nor damage to the Church.  
Smoothe thou his pride—thy signing is but form ;  
Nay, and should harm come of it, it is the Pope  
Will be to blame—not thou. Over and over  
He told me thou shouldst pacify the King,  
Lest there be battle between Heaven and Earth,  
And Earth should get the better—for the time.  
Cannot the Pope absolve thee if thou sign ?

BECKET. Have I the orders of the Holy  
Father ?

PHILIP DE ELEMOSYNA. Orders, my lord—  
why, no ; for what am I ?  
The secret whisper of the Holy Father.  
Thou, that hast been a statesman, couldst thou  
always  
Blurt thy free mind to the air ?

BECKET. If Rome be feeble, then should I be  
firm.

PHILIP. Take it not that way—balk not the  
Pope's will.  
When he hath shaken off the Emperor,  
He heads the Church against the King with  
thee.

RICHARD DE HASTINGS (*kneeling*). Becket, I  
am the oldest of the Templars ;  
I knew thy father ; he would be mine age

Had he lived now ; think of me as thy father !  
Behold thy father kneeling to thee, Becket.  
Submit ; I promise thee on my salvation  
That thou wilt hear no more o' the customs.

BECKET. What !

Hath Henry told thee ? hast thou talk'd with  
him ?

Another *TEMPLAR (kneeling)*. Father, I am the  
youngest of the Templars,  
Look on me as I were thy bodily son,  
For, like a son, I lift my hands to thee.

PHILIP. Wilt thou hold out for ever, Thomas  
Becket ?

Dost thou not hear ?

BECKET (*signs*). Why—there then—there—  
I sign,

And swear to obey the customs.

FOLIOT. Is it thy will,  
My lord Archbishop, that we too should sign ?

BECKET. O ay, by that canonical obedience  
Thou still hast owed thy father, Gilbert Foliot.

FOLIOT. Loyally and with good faith, my lord  
Archbishop ?

BECKET. O ay, with all that loyalty and  
good faith  
Thou still hast shown thy primate, Gilbert Foliot.

[*BECKET draws apart with HERBERT.*

Herbert, Herbert, have I betray'd the Church ?  
I'll have the paper back—blot out my name.

HERBERT. Too late, my lord : you see they  
are signing there.

BECKET. False to myself—it is the will of  
God

To break me, prove me nothing of myself!

This Almoner hath tasted Henry's gold.

The cardinals have finger'd Henry's gold.

And Rome is venal ev'n to rottenness.

I see it, I see it.

I am no soldier, as he said—at least

No leader. Herbert, till I hear from the Pope

I will suspend myself from all my functions.

If fast and prayer, the lacerating scourge——

FOLIOT (*from the table*). My lord Archbishop,  
thou hast yet to seal.

BECKET. First, Foliot, let me see what I  
have sign'd. [*Goes to the table.*]

What, this! and this!—what! new and old  
together!

Seal? If a seraph shouted from the sun,

And bad me seal against the rights of the Church,

I would anathematise him. I will not seal.

[*Exit with HERBERT.*]

*Enter KING HENRY*

HENRY. Where's Thomas? hath he sign'd?  
show me the papers!

Sign'd and not seal'd! How's that?

JOHN OF OXFORD. He would not seal.

And when he sign'd, his face was stormy-red—

Shame, wrath, I know not what. He sat down  
there

And dropt it in his hands, and then a paleness,  
Like the wan twilight after sunset, crept  
Up even to the tonsure, and he groan'd,  
'False to myself! It is the will of God!'

HENRY. God's will be what it will, the man  
shall seal,  
Or I will seal his doom. My burgher's son—  
Nay, if I cannot break him as the prelate,  
I'll crush him as the subject. Send for him back.  
*[Sits on his throne.]*

Barons and bishops of our realm of England,  
After the nineteen winters of King Stephen—  
A reign which was no reign, when none could  
sit

By his own hearth in peace; when murder  
common

As nature's death, like Egypt's plague, had fill'd  
All things with blood; when every doorway  
blush'd,

Dash'd red with that unhallow'd passover;  
When every baron ground his blade in blood;  
The household dough was kneaded up with  
blood;

The millwheel turn'd in blood; the wholesome  
plow

Lay rusting in the furrow's yellow weeds,  
Till famine dwarft the race—I came, your King!  
Nor dwelt alone, like a soft lord of the East,  
In mine own hall, and sucking thro' fools' ears  
The flatteries of corruption—went abroad  
Thro' all my counties, spied my people's ways;

Yea, heard the churl against the baron—yea,  
And did him justice ; sat in mine own courts  
Judging my judges, that had found a King  
Who ranged confusions, made the twilight day,  
And struck a shape from out the vague, and law  
From madness. And the event—our fallows  
till'd,

Much corn, repeopled towns, a realm again.  
So far my course, albeit not glassy-smooth,  
Had prosper'd in the main, but suddenly  
Jarr'd on this rock. A cleric violated  
The daughter of his host, and murder'd him.  
Bishops—York, London, Chichester, West-  
minster—

Ye haled this tonsured devil into your courts ;  
But since your canon will not let you take  
Life for a life, ye but degraded him  
Where I had hang'd him. What doth hard  
murder care

For degradation ? and that made me muse,  
Being bounden by my coronation oath  
To do men justice. Look to it, your own selves !  
Say that a cleric murder'd an archbishop,  
What could ye do ? Degrade, imprison him—  
Not death for death.

JOHN OF OXFORD. But I, my liege, could  
swear,  
To death for death.

HENRY. And, looking thro' my reign,  
I found a hundred ghastly murders done  
By men, the scum and offal of the Church ;



Then, glancing thro' the story of this realm,  
I came on certain wholesome usages,  
Lost in desuetude, of my grandsire's day,  
Good royal customs—had them written fair  
For John of Oxford here to read to you.

JOHN OF OXFORD. And I can easily swear to  
these as being

The King's will and God's will and justice ; yet  
I could but read a part to-day, because——

FITZURSE. Because my lord of Canterbury——

DE TRACY. Ay,

This lord of Canterbury——

DE BRITO. As is his wont

Too much of late whene'er your royal rights  
Are mooted in our councils——

FITZURSE. —made an uproar.

HENRY. And Becket had my bosom on all  
this ;

If ever man by bonds of gratefulness——

I raised him from the puddle of the gutter,  
I made him porcelain from the clay of the city——  
Thought that I knew him, err'd thro' love of  
him,

Hoped, were he chosen archbishop, Church and  
Crown,

Two sisters gliding in an equal dance,  
Two rivers gently flowing side by side——  
But no !

The bird that moults sings the same song again,  
The snake that sloughs comes out a snake again.  
Snake—ay, but he that lookt a fangless one,

Issues a venomous adder.

For he, when having doff't the Chancellor's  
robe—

Flung the Great Seal of England in my face—  
Claim'd some of our crown lands for Canter-  
bury—

My comrade, boon companion, my co-reveller,  
The master of his master, the King's king.—  
God's eyes ! I had meant to make him all but  
king.

Chancellor-Archbishop, he might well have  
sway'd

All England under Henry, the young King,  
When I was hence. What did the traitor say ?  
False to himself, but ten-fold false to me !  
The will of God—why, then it is my will—  
Is he coming ?

MESSENGER (*entering*). With a crowd of wor-  
shippers,  
And holds his cross before him thro' the crowd,  
As one that puts himself in sanctuary.

HENRY. His cross !

ROGER OF YORK. His cross ! I'll front him,  
cross to cross. [*Exit* ROGER OF YORK.

HENRY. His cross ! it is the traitor that  
imputes

Treachery to his King !

It is not safe for me to look upon him.

Away—with me !

[*Goes in with his BARONS to the Council-chamber,  
the door of which is left open.*

# BECKET

ACT I

*Enter BECKET, holding his cross of silver before him.  
The BISHOPS come round him.*

HEREFORD. The King will not abide thee  
with thy cross.

Permit me, my good lord, to bear it for thee,  
Being thy chaplain.

BECKET. No : it must protect me.

HERBERT. As once he bore the standard of  
the Angles,  
So now he bears the standard of the angels.

FOLIOT. I am the Dean of the province : let  
me bear it.

Make not thy King a traitorous murderer.

BECKET. Did not your barons draw their  
swords against me ?

*Enter ROGER OF YORK, with his cross, advancing to  
BECKET*

BECKET. Wherefore dost thou presume to  
bear thy cross,  
Against the solemn ordinance from Rome,  
Out of thy province ?

ROGER OF YORK. Why dost thou presume,  
Arm'd with thy cross, to come before the King ?  
If Canterbury bring his cross to court,  
Let York bear his to mate with Canterbury.

FOLIOT (*seizing hold of BECKET's cross*). Nay,  
nay, my lord, thou must not brave the  
King.

Nay, let me have it. I will have it !

BECKET.

Away !

[*Flinging him off.*]

FOLIOT. *He* fasts, they say, this mitred  
Hercules !

*He* fast ! is that an arm of fast ? My lord,  
Hadst thou not sign'd, I had gone along with  
thee ;

But thou the shepherd hast betray'd the sheep,  
And thou art perjured, and thou wilt not seal.  
As Chancellor thou wast against the Church,  
Now as Archbishop goest against the King ;  
For, like a fool, thou knowst no middle way.  
Ay, ay ! but art thou stronger than the King ?

BECKET. Strong—not in mine own self, but  
Heaven ; true

To either function, holding it ; and thou  
Fast, scourge thyself, and mortify thy flesh,  
Not spirit—thou remainest Gilbert Foliot,  
A worldly follower of the worldly strong.  
I, bearing this great ensign, make it clear  
Under what Prince I fight.

FOLIOT.

My lord of York,

Let us go in to the Council, where our bishops  
And our great lords will sit in judgment on him.

BECKET. Sons sit in judgment on their father !  
—then

The spire of Holy Church may prick the graves—  
Her crypt among the stars. Sign ? seal ? I  
promised

The King to obey these customs, not yet written,  
Saving mine order ; true too, that when written

# BECKET

ACT I

I sign'd them—being a fool, as Foliot call'd me.

I hold not by my signing. Get ye hence,  
Tell what I say to the King.

[*Exeunt* HEREFORD, FOLIOT, and other BISHOPS.

ROGER OF YORK. The Church will hate thee.  
[*Exit.*

BECKET. Serve my best friend and make him  
my worst foe ;  
Fight for the Church, and set the Church against  
me !

HERBERT. To be honest is to set all knaves  
against thee.

Ah ! Thomas, excommunicate them all !

HEREFORD (*re-entering*). I cannot brook the  
turmoil thou hast raised.

I would, my lord Thomas of Canterbury,  
Thou wert plain Thomas and not Canterbury,  
Or that thou wouldst deliver Canterbury  
To our King's hands again, and be at peace.

HILARY (*re-entering*). For hath not thine am-  
bition set the Church

This day between the hammer and the anvil—  
Fealty to the King, obedience to thyself?

HERBERT. What say the bishops ?

HILARY. Some have pleaded for him,  
But the King rages—most are with the King ;  
And some are reeds, that one time sway to the  
current,

And to the wind another. But we hold  
Thou art forsworn ; and no forsworn Archbishop

Shall helm the Church. We therefore place  
ourselves

Under the shield and safeguard of the Pope,  
And cite thee to appear before the Pope,  
And answer thine accusers. . . . Art thou deaf?

BECKET. I hear you. *[Clash of arms.]*

HILARY. Dost thou hear those others?

BECKET. Ay!

ROGER OF YORK (*re-entering*). The King's 'God's  
eyes!' come now so thick and fast,  
We fear that he may reave thee of thine own.

Come on, come on! it is not fit for us  
To see the proud Archbishop mutilated.  
Say that he blind thee and tear out thy tongue.

BECKET. So be it. He begins at top with  
me:

They crucified St. Peter downward.

ROGER OF YORK. Nay,  
But for their sake who stagger betwixt thine  
Appeal, and Henry's anger, yield.

BECKET. Hence, Satan!

*[Exit ROGER OF YORK.]*

FITZURSE (*re-entering*). My lord, the King  
demands three hundred marks,  
Due from his castles of Berkhamstead and Eye  
When thou thereof wast warden.

BECKET. Tell the King  
I spent thrice that in fortifying his castles.

DE TRACY (*re-entering*). My lord, the King  
demands seven hundred marks,  
Lent at the siege of Thoulouse by the King.

# BECKET

ACT I

BECKET. I led seven hundred knights and fought his wars.

DE BRITO (*re-entering*). My lord, the King demands five hundred marks, Advanced thee at his instance by the Jews, For which the King was bound security.

BECKET. I thought it was a gift ; I thought it was a gift.

*Enter LORD LEICESTER (followed by BARONS and BISHOPS)*

My lord, I come unwillingly. The King Demands a strict account of all those revenues From all the vacant sees and abbasies, Which came into thy hands when Chancellor.

BECKET. How much might that amount to, my lord Leicester ?

LEICESTER. Some thirty—forty thousand silver marks.

BECKET. Are these your customs ? O my good lord Leicester, The King and I were brothers. All I had I lavish'd for the glory of the King ; I shone from him, for him, his glory, his Reflection : now the glory of the Church Hath swallow'd up the glory of the King ; I am his no more, but hers. Grant me one day To ponder these demands.

LEICESTER. Hear first thy sentence ! The King and all his lords——

BECKET. Son, first hear *me* !

LEICESTER. Nay, nay, canst thou, that holdest  
thine estates

In fee and barony of the King, decline  
The judgment of the King ?

BECKET. The King ! I hold  
Nothing in fee and barony of the King.  
Whatever the Church owns—she holds it in  
Free and perpetual alms, unsubject to  
One earthly sceptre.

LEICESTER. Nay, but hear thy judgment.  
The King and all his barons——

BECKET. Judgment ! Barons !  
Who but the bridegroom dares to judge the bride.  
Or he the bridegroom may appoint ? Not he  
That is not of the house, but from the street  
Stain'd with the mire thereof.

I had been so true  
To Henry and mine office that the King  
Would throne me in the great Archbishoprick :  
And I, that knew mine own infirmity,  
For the King's pleasure rather than God's cause  
Took it upon me—err'd thro' love of him.  
Now therefore God from me withdraws Him-  
self,  
And the King too.

What ! forty thousand marks !  
Why thou, the King, the Pope, the Saints, the  
world,  
Know that when made Archbishop I was freed,  
Before the Prince and chief Justiciary,



From every bond and debt and obligation  
Incurr'd as Chancellor.

Hear me, son.

As gold

Outvalues dross, light darkness, Abel Cain,  
The soul the body, and the Church the Throne,  
I charge thee, upon pain of mine anathema,  
That thou obey, not me, but God in me,  
Rather than Henry. I refuse to stand  
By the King's censure, make my cry to the Pope,  
By whom I will be judged ; refer myself,  
The King, these customs, all the Church, to him,  
And under his authority—I depart. *[Going.*

*[LEICESTER looks at him doubtingly.*

Am I a prisoner ?

LEICESTER. By St. Lazarus, no !  
I am confounded by thee. Go in peace.

DE BROC. In peace now—but after. Take  
that for earnest.

*[Flings a bone at him from the rushes.*

DE BRITO, FITZURSE, DE TRACY, AND OTHERS  
*(flinging wisps of rushes)*. Ay, go in peace, caitiff,  
caitiff ! And that too, perjured prelate—and that,  
turncoat shaveling ! There, there, there ! traitor,  
traitor, traitor !

BECKET. Mannerless wolves !

*[Turning and facing them.*

HERBERT. Enough, my lord, enough !

BECKET. Barons of England and of Normandy,  
When what ye shake at doth but seem to fly,  
True test of coward, ye follow with a yell.

But I that threw the mightiest knight of France,  
Sir Engelram de Trie,——

HERBERT. Enough, my lord.

BECKET. More than enough. I play the fool  
again.

*Enter HERALD*

HERALD. The King commands you, upon  
pain of death,  
That none should wrong or injure your Arch-  
bishop.

FOLIOT. Deal gently with the young man  
Absalom.

*[Great doors of the Hall at the back open, and  
discover a crowd. They shout:]*

Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the  
Lord !

## SCENE IV

REFECTORY OF THE MONASTERY AT NORTHAMPTON

*A banquet on the Tables*

*Enter BECKET. BECKET'S RETAINERS.*

1ST RETAINER. Do thou speak first.

2ND RETAINER. Nay, thou ! Nay, thou !  
Hast not thou drawn the short straw ?

1ST RETAINER. My lord Archbishop, wilt  
thou permit us——

BECKET. To speak without stammering and  
like a free man ? Ay.

## BECKET

ACT I

1ST RETAINER. My lord, permit us then to leave thy service.

BECKET. When?

1ST RETAINER. Now.

BECKET. To-night?

1ST RETAINER. To-night, my lord.

BECKET. And why?

1ST RETAINER. My lord, we leave thee not without tears.

BECKET. Tears? Why not stay with me then?

1ST RETAINER. My lord, we cannot yield thee an answer altogether to thy satisfaction.

BECKET. I warrant you, or your own either. Shall I find you one? The King hath frowned upon me.

1ST RETAINER. That is not altogether our answer, my lord.

BECKET. No; yet all but all. Go, go! Ye have eaten of my dish and drunken of my cup for a dozen years.

1ST RETAINER. And so we have. We mean thee no wrong. Wilt thou not say, 'God bless you,' ere we go?

BECKET. God bless you all! God redden your pale blood! But mine is human-red; and when ye shall hear it is poured out upon earth, and see it mounting to Heaven, my God bless you, that seems sweet to you now, will blast and blind you like a curse.

1ST RETAINER. We hope not, my lord.

Our humblest thanks for your blessing. Farewell !  
[*Exeunt* RETAINERS.]

BECKET. Farewell, friends ! farewell, swallows ! I wrong the bird ; she leaves only the nest she built, they leave the builder. Why ? Am I to be murdered to-night ?

[*Knocking at the door.*]

ATTENDANT. Here is a missive left at the gate by one from the castle.

BECKET. Cornwall's hand or Leicester's : they write marvellously alike.  
[*Reading.*]

'Fly at once to France, to King Louis of France : there be those about our King who would have thy blood.'

Was not my lord of Leicester bidden to our supper ?

ATTENDANT. Ay, my lord, and divers other earls and barons. But the hour is past, and our brother, Master Cook, he makes moan that all be a-getting cold.

BECKET. And I make my moan along with him. Cold after warm, winter after summer, and the golden leaves, these earls and barons, that clung to me, frosted off me by the first cold frown of the King. Cold, but look how the table steams, like a heathen altar ; nay, like the altar at Jerusalem. Shall God's good gifts be wasted ? None of them here ! Call in the poor from the streets, and let them feast.

# BECKET

ACT I

HERBERT. That is the parable of our blessed Lord.

BECKET. And why should not the parable of our blessed Lord be acted again? Call in the poor! The Church is ever at variance with the kings, and ever at one with the poor. I marked a group of lazars in the marketplace—half-rag, half-sore—beggars, poor rogues (Heaven bless 'em) who never saw nor dreamed of such a banquet. I will amaze them. Call them in, I say. They shall henceforward be my earls and barons—our lords and masters in Christ Jesus.

[Exit HERBERT.]

If the King hold his purpose, I am myself a beggar. Forty thousand marks! forty thousand devils—and these craven bishops!

*A POOR MAN (entering) with his dog*

My lord Archbishop, may I come in with my poor friend, my dog? The King's verdurer caught him a-hunting in the forest, and cut off his paws. The dog followed his calling, my lord. I ha' carried him ever so many miles in my arms, and he licks my face and moans and cries out against the King.

BECKET. Better thy dog than thee. The King's courts would use thee worse than thy dog—they are too bloody. Were the Church king, it would be otherwise. Poor beast! poor beast! set him down. I will bind up his

wounds with my napkin. Give him a bone, give him a bone! Who misuses a dog would misuse a child—they cannot speak for themselves. Past help! his paws are past help. God help him!

*Enter the BEGGARS (and seat themselves at the Tables).  
BECKET and HERBERT wait upon them.*

1ST BEGGAR. Swine, sheep, ox—here's a French supper. When thieves fall out, honest men——

2ND BEGGAR. Is the Archbishop a thief who gives thee thy supper?

1ST BEGGAR. Well, then, how does it go? When honest men fall out, thieves—no, it can't be that.

2ND BEGGAR. Who stole the widow's one sitting hen o' Sunday, when she was at mass?

1ST BEGGAR. Come, come! thou hadst thy share on her. Sitting hen! Our Lord Becket's our great sitting-hen cock, and we shouldn't ha' been sitting here if the barons and bishops hadn't been a-sitting on the Archbishop.

BECKET. Ay, the princes sat in judgment against me, and the Lord hath prepared your table—*Sederunt principes, ederunt pauperes.*

A VOICE. Becket, beware of the knife!

BECKET. Who spoke?

3RD BEGGAR. Nobody, my lord. What's that, my lord?

## BECKET

ACT I

BECKET. Venison.

3RD BEGGAR. Venison?

BECKET. Buck; deer, as you call it.

3RD BEGGAR. King's meat! By the Lord, won't we pray for your lordship!

BECKET. And, my children, your prayers will do more for me in the day of peril that dawns darkly and drearily over the house of God—yea, and in the day of judgment also, than the swords of the craven sycophants would have done had they remained true to me whose bread they have partaken. I must leave you to your banquet. Feed, feast, and be merry. Herbert, for the sake of the Church itself, if not for my own, I must fly to France to-night. Come with me. *[Exit with HERBERT.]*

3RD BEGGAR. Here—all of you—my lord's health (*they drink*). Well—if that isn't goodly wine——

1ST BEGGAR. Then there isn't a goodly wench to serve him with it: they were fighting for her to-day in the street.

3RD BEGGAR. Peace!

1ST BEGGAR.

The black sheep baaed to the miller's ewe-lamb,

The miller's away for to-night.

Black sheep, quoth she, too black a sin for me.

And what said the black sheep, my masters?

We can make a black sin white.

3RD BEGGAR. Peace!

1ST BEGGAR.

‘Ewe lamb, ewe lamb, I am here by the dam.’  
But the miller came home that night,  
And so dusted his back with the meal in his sack,  
That he made the black sheep white.

3RD BEGGAR. Be we not of the family? be  
we not a-supping with the head of the family?  
be we not in my lord’s own refractory? Out  
from among us; thou art our black sheep.

*Enter the four* KNIGHTS

FITZURSE. Sheep, said he? And sheep with-  
out the shepherd, too. Where is my lord  
Archbishop? Thou the lustiest and lousiest of  
this Cain’s brotherhood, answer.

3RD BEGGAR. With Cain’s answer, my lord.  
Am I his keeper? Thou shouldst call him  
Cain, not me.

FITZURSE. So I do, for he would murder his  
brother the State.

3RD BEGGAR (*rising and advancing*). No, my  
lord; but because the Lord hath set his mark  
upon him that no man should murder him.

FITZURSE. Where is he? where is he?

3RD BEGGAR. With Cain belike, in the land  
of Nod, or in the land of France for aught I  
know.

FITZURSE. France! Ha! De Morville, Tracy,



## BECKET

ACT I

BRITO—fled is he? Cross swords all of you! swear to follow him! Remember the Queen!

*[The four KNIGHTS cross their swords.]*

DE BRITO. They mock us; he is here.

*[All the BEGGARS rise and advance upon them.]*

FITZURSE. Come, you filthy knaves, let us pass.

3RD BEGGAR. Nay, my lord, let *us* pass. We be a-going home after our supper in all humbleness, my lord; for the Archbishop loves humbleness, my lord; and though we be fifty to four, we daren't fight you with our crutches, my lord. There now, if thou hast not laid hands upon me! and my fellows know that I am all one scale like a fish. I pray God I haven't given thee my leprosy, my lord.

*[FITZURSE shrinks from him and another presses upon DE BRITO.]*

DE BRITO. Away, dog!

4TH BEGGAR. And I was bit by a mad dog o' Friday, an' I be half dog already by this token, that tho' I can drink wine I cannot bide water, my lord; and I want to bite, I want to bite, and they do say the very breath catches.

DE BRITO. Insolent clown. Shall I smite him with the edge of the sword?

DE MORVILLE. No, nor with the flat of it either. Smite the shepherd and the sheep are scattered. Smite the sheep and the shepherd will excommunicate thee.

DE BRITO. Yet my fingers itch to beat him into nothing.

5TH BEGGAR. So do mine, my lord. I was born with it, and sulphur won't bring it out o' me. But for all that the Archbishop washed my feet o' Tuesday. He likes it, my lord.

6TH BEGGAR. And see here, my lord, this rag fro' the gangrene i' my leg. It's humbling—it smells o' human natur'. Wilt thou smell it, my lord? for the Archbishop likes the smell on it, my lord; for I be his lord and master i' Christ, my lord.

DE MORVILLE. Faugh! we shall all be poisoned. Let us go.

*[They draw back, BEGGARS following.]*

7TH BEGGAR. My lord, I ha' three sisters a-dying at home o' the sweating sickness. They be dead while I be a-supping.

8TH BEGGAR. And I ha' nine darters i' the spital that be dead ten times o'er i' one day wi' the putrid fever; and I bring the taint on it along wi' me, for the Archbishop likes it, my lord.

*[Pressing upon the KNIGHTS till they disappear thro' the door.]*

3RD BEGGAR. Crutches, and itches, and leprosies, and ulcers, and gangrenes, and running sores, praise ye the Lord, for to-night ye have saved our Archbishop!

1ST BEGGAR. I'll go back again. I hain't half done yet.

HERBERT OF BOSHAM (*entering*). My friends, the Archbishop bids you good-night. He hath

## BECKET

ACT I

retired to rest, and being in great jeopardy of his life, he hath made his bed between the altars, from whence he sends me to bid you this night pray for him who hath fed you in the wilderness.

3RD BEGGAR. So we will—so we will, I warrant thee. Becket shall be king, and the Holy Father shall be king, and the world shall live by the King's venison and the bread o' the Lord, and there shall be no more poor for ever. Hurrah! Vive le Roy! That's the English of it.

## ACT II

### SCENE I.—ROSAMUND'S BOWER

*A Garden of Flowers. In the midst a bank of wild-flowers with a bench before it.*

*Voices heard singing among the trees*

#### *Duet*

1. Is it the wind of the dawn that I hear in the pine overhead ?
2. No ; but the voice of the deep as it hollows the cliffs of the land.
1. Is there a voice coming up with the voice of the deep from the strand,  
One coming up with a song in the flush of the glimmering red ?
2. Love that is born of the deep coming up with the sun from the sea.
1. Love that can shape or can shatter a life till the life shall have fled ?
2. Nay, let us welcome him, Love that can lift up a life from the dead.

## BECKET

ACT II

1. Keep him away from the lone little isle.  
Let us be, let us be.
2. Nay, let him make it his own, let him reign  
in it—he, it is he,  
Love that is born of the deep coming up with  
the sun from the sea.

*Enter HENRY and ROSAMUND*

ROSAMUND. Be friends with him again—I  
do beseech thee.

HENRY. With Becket? I have but one  
hour with thee—

Sceptre and crozier clashing, and the mitre  
Grappling the crown—and when I flee from  
this

For a gasp of freer air, a breathing-while  
To rest upon thy bosom and forget him—  
Why thou, my bird, thou pipest Becket, Becket—  
Yea, thou my golden dream of Love's own bower,  
Must be the nightmare breaking on my peace  
With 'Becket.'

ROSAMUND. O my life's life, not to smile  
Is all but death to me. My sun, no cloud!  
Let there not be one frown in this one hour.  
Out of the many thine, let this be mine!  
Look rather thou all-royal as when first  
I met thee.

HENRY. Where was that?

ROSAMUND. Forgetting that  
Forgets me too.

HENRY. Nay, I remember it well.  
There on the moors.

ROSAMUND. And in a narrow path.  
A plover flew before thee. Then I saw  
Thy high black steed among the flaming furze,  
Like sudden night in the main glare of day.  
And from that height something was said to me  
I knew not what.

HENRY. I ask'd the way.

ROSAMUND. I think so.  
So I lost mine.

HENRY. Thou wast too shamed to answer.

ROSAMUND. Too scared—so young !

HENRY. The rosebud of my rose !—  
Well, well, no more of *him*—I have sent his folk,  
His kin, all his belongings, overseas ;  
Age, orphans, and babe-breasting mothers—all  
By hundreds to him—there to beg, starve, die—  
So that the fool King Louis feed them not.  
The man shall feel that I can strike him yet.

ROSAMUND. Babes, orphans, mothers ! is that  
royal, Sire ?

HENRY. And I have been as royal with the  
Church.

He shelter'd in the Abbey of Pontigny.  
There wore his time studying the canon law  
To work it against me. But since he cursed  
My friends at Veselay, I have let them know,  
That if they keep him longer as their guest,  
I scatter all their cowls to all the hells.

ROSAMUND. And is that altogether royal ?

# BECKET

ACT II

HENRY. Traitor !

ROSAMUND. A faithful traitress to thy royal  
fame.

HENRY. Fame ! what care I for fame ?

Spite, ignorance, envy,

Yea, honesty too, paint her what way they will.

Fame of to-day is infamy to-morrow ;

Infamy of to-day is fame to-morrow ;

And round and round again. What matters ?

Royal—

I mean to leave the royalty of my crown

Unlessen'd to mine heirs.

ROSAMUND.

Still—thy fame too :

I say that should be royal.

HENRY.

And I say,

I care not for thy saying.

ROSAMUND.

And I say,

I care not for *thy* saying. A greater King

Than thou art, Love, who cares not for the  
word,

Makes 'care not'—care. There have I spoken  
true ?

HENRY. Care dwell with me for ever, when  
I cease

To care for thee as ever !

ROSAMUND.

No need ! no need ! . . .

There is a bench. Come, wilt thou sit ? . . .

My bank

Of wild-flowers [*he sits*]. At thy feet !

[*She sits at his feet.*

HENRY.

I bad them clear

A royal pleasaunce for thee, in the wood,  
Not leave these countryfolk at court.

ROSAMUND. I brought them  
In from the wood, and set them here. I love  
them

More than the garden flowers, that seem at most  
Sweet guests, or foreign cousins, not half  
speaking

The language of the land. I love *them* too,  
Yes. But, my liege, I am sure, of all the roses—  
Shame fall on those who gave it a dog's name—  
This wild one (*picking a briar-rose*)—nay, I  
shall not prick myself—

Is sweetest. Do but smell !

HENRY. Thou rose of the world !  
Thou rose of all the roses ! [*Muttering.*  
I am not worthy of her—this beast-body  
That God has plunged my soul in—I, that taking  
The Fiend's advantage of a throne, so long  
Have wander'd among women,—a foul stream  
Thro' fever-breeding levels,—at her side,  
Among these happy dales, run clearer, drop  
The mud I carried, like yon brook, and glass  
The faithful face of heaven—

[*Looking at her, and unconsciously aloud,*  
—thine ! thine !

ROSAMUND. I know it.

HENRY (*muttering*). Not hers. We have but  
one bond, her hate of Becket.

ROSAMUND (*half hearing*). Nay ! nay ! what  
art thou muttering ? I hate Becket ?



# BECKET

ACT II

HENRY (*muttering*). A sane and natural loathing for a soul

Purer, and truer and nobler than herself;  
And mine a bitterer illegitimate hate,  
A bastard hate born of a former love.

ROSAMUND. My fault to name him! O let  
the hand of one

To whom thy voice is all her music, stay it  
But for a breath. [*Puts her hand before his lips.*  
Speak only of thy love.

Why there—like some loud beggar at thy  
gate—

The happy boldness of this hand hath won it  
Love's alms, thy kiss (*looking at her hand*)—  
Sacred! I'll kiss it too. [*Kissing it.*

There! wherefore dost thou so peruse it? Nay,  
There may be crosses in my line of life.

HENRY. Not half *her* hand—no hand to mate  
with *her*,

If it should come to that.

ROSAMUND. With her? with whom?

HENRY. Life on the hand is naked gipsy-  
stuff;

Life on the face, the brows—clear innocence!  
Vein'd marble—not a furrow yet—and hers  
[*Muttering.*

Crosth and recrosth, a venomous spider's web—

ROSAMUND (*springing up*). Out of the cloud,  
my Sun—out of the eclipse

Narrowing my golden hour!

HENRY.

O Rosamund,

I would be true—would tell thee all—and something

I had to say—I love thee none the less—

Which will so vex thee.

ROSAMUND.                    Something against *me*?

HENRY. No, no, against myself.

ROSAMUND. I will not hear it.  
Come, come, mine hour ! I bargain for mine  
hour.

I'll call thee little Geoffrey.

HENRY. Call him !

ROSAMUND. Geoffrey !

*Enter* GEOFFREY

HENRY. How the boy grows !

ROSAMUND. Ay, and his brows are thine ;  
The mouth is only Clifford, my dear father.

GEOFFREY. My liege, what hast thou brought  
me?

HENRY.                    Venal imp !  
What say'st thou to the Chancellorship of  
                                 England ?

GEOFFREY. O yes, my liege.

HENRY. 'O yes, my liege !' He speaks  
As if it were a cake of gingerbread.

Dost thou know, my boy, what it is to be  
Chancellor of England?

GEOFFREY. Something good, or thou wouldst not give it me.

HENRY. It is, my boy, to side with the King

# BECKET

ACT II

when Chancellor, and then to be made Archbishop and go against the King who made him, and turn the world upside down.

GEOFFREY. I won't have it then. Nay, but give it me, and I promise thee not to turn the world upside down.

HENRY (*giving him a ball*). Here is a ball, my boy, thy world, to turn anyway and play with as thou wilt—which is more than I can do with mine. Go try it, play. [*Exit GEOFFREY.*

A pretty lusty boy.

ROSAMUND. So like to thee ;  
Like to be liker.

HENRY. Not in my chin, I hope !  
That threatens double.

ROSAMUND. Thou art manlike perfect.

HENRY. Ay, ay, no doubt ; and were I  
humpt behind,  
Thou'dst say as much—the goodly way of women  
Who love, for which I love them. May God  
grant

No ill befall or him or thee when I  
Am gone.

ROSAMUND. Is *he* thy enemy ?

HENRY. He ? who ? ay !

ROSAMUND. Thine enemy knows the secret  
of my bower.

HENRY. And I could tear him asunder with  
wild horses

Before he would betray it. Nay—no fear !  
More like is he to excommunicate me.

ROSAMUND. And I would creep, crawl over  
knife-edge flint  
Barefoot, a hundred leagues, to stay his hand  
Before he flash'd the bolt.

HENRY. And when he flash'd it  
Shrink from me, like a daughter of the Church.

ROSAMUND. Ay, but he will not.

HENRY. Ay ! but if he did ?

ROSAMUND. O then ! O then ! I almost fear  
to say  
That my poor heretic heart would excommuni-  
cate

His excommunication, clinging to thee  
Closer than ever.

HENRY (*raising ROSAMUND and kissing her*).  
My brave-hearted Rose !

Hath he ever been to see thee ?

ROSAMUND. Here ? not he.  
And it is so lonely here—no confessor.

HENRY. Thou shalt confess all thy sweet sins  
to me.

ROSAMUND. Besides, we came away in such  
a heat,  
I brought not ev'n my crucifix.

HENRY. Take this.

[*Giving her the Crucifix which ELEANOR gave him.*]

ROSAMUND. O beautiful ! May I have it as  
mine, till mine  
Be mine again ?

HENRY (*throwing it round her neck*). Thine—  
as I am—till death !

## BECKET

ACT II

ROSAMUND. Death? no! I'll have it with  
me in my shroud,  
And wake with it, and show it to all the Saints.

HENRY. Nay—I must go; but when thou  
layest thy lip  
To this, remembering One who died for thee,  
Remember also one who lives for thee  
Out there in France; for I must hence to brave  
The Pope, King Louis, and this turbulent priest.

ROSAMUND (*kneeling*). O by thy love for me,  
all mine for thee,  
Fling not thy soul into the flames of hell:  
I kneel to thee—be friends with him again.

HENRY. Look, look! if little Geoffrey have  
not tost  
His ball into the brook! makes after it too  
To find it. Why, the child will drown himself.

ROSAMUND. Geoffrey! Geoffrey! [*Exeunt.*]

## SCENE II

### MONTMIRAIL

'*The Meeting of the Kings.*' JOHN OF OXFORD and

HENRY. *Crowd in the distance.*

JOHN OF OXFORD. You have not crown'd  
young Henry yet, my liege?

HENRY. Crown'd! by God's eyes, we will  
not have him crown'd.

I spoke of late to the boy, he answer'd me,  
As if he wore the crown already—No,  
We will not have him crown'd.

'Tis true what Becket told me, that the mother  
Would make him play his kingship against mine.

JOHN OF OXFORD. Not have him crown'd?

HENRY. Not now—not yet ! and Becket—  
Becket should crown him were he crown'd at all :  
But, since we would be lord of our own manor,  
This Canterbury, like a wounded deer,  
Has fled our presence and our feeding-grounds.

JOHN OF OXFORD. Cannot a smooth tongue  
lick him whole again  
To serve your will ?

HENRY. He hates my will, not me.

JOHN OF OXFORD. There's York, my liege.

HENRY. But England scarce would hold  
Young Henry king, if only crown'd by York,  
And that would stilt up York to twice himself.  
There is a movement yonder in the crowd—  
See if our pious—what shall I call him, John?—  
Husband-in-law, our smooth-shorn suzerain,  
Be yet within the field.

JOHN OF OXFORD. I will. [Exit.

HENRY. Ay ! Ay !

Mince and go back ! his politic Holiness  
Hath all but climb'd the Roman perch again,  
And we shall hear him presently with clapt wing  
Crow over Barbarossa—at last tongue-free  
To blast my realms with excommunication  
And interdict. I must patch up a peace—

# BECKET

ACT II

A piece in this long-tugged-at, threadbare-worn  
Quarrel of Crown and Church—to rend again.  
His Holiness cannot steer straight thro' shoals,  
Nor I. The citizen's heir hath conquer'd me  
For the moment. So we make our peace with  
him.

*Enter LOUIS*

Brother of France, what shall be done with  
Becket?

LOUIS. The holy Thomas! Brother, you  
have traffick'd

Between the Emperor and the Pope, between  
The Pope and Antipope—a perilous game  
For men to play with God.

HENRY. Ay, ay, good brother,  
They call you the Monk-King.

LOUIS. Who calls me? she  
That was my wife, now yours? You have her  
Duchy,  
The point you aim'd at, and pray God she  
prove

True wife to you. You have had the better of us  
In secular matters.

HENRY. Come, confess, good brother,  
You did your best or worst to keep her Duchy.  
Only the golden Leopard printed in it  
Such hold-fast claws that you perforce again  
Shrank into France. Tut, tut! did we convene  
This conference but to babble of our wives?  
They are plagues enough in-door.

LOUIS. We fought in the East,  
And felt the sun of Antioch scald our mail,  
And push'd our lances into Saracen hearts.  
We never hounded on the State at home  
To spoil the Church.

HENRY. How should you see this rightly ?

LOUIS. Well, well, no more ! I am proud of  
my 'Monk-King,'  
Whoever named me ; and, brother, Holy Church  
May rock, but will not wreck, nor our Arch-  
bishop  
Stagger on the slope decks for any rough sea  
Blown by the breath of kings. We do forgive  
you

For aught you wrought against us.

[HENRY holds up his hand.

Nay, I pray you,  
Do not defend yourself. You will do much  
To rake out all old dying heats, if you,  
At my requesting, will but look into  
The wrongs you did him, and restore his kin,  
Reseat him on his throne of Canterbury,  
Be, both, the friends you were.

HENRY. The friends we were !  
Co-mates we were, and had our sport together,  
Co-kings we were, and made the laws together.  
The world had never seen the like before.  
You are too cold to know the fashion of it.  
Well, well, we will be gentle with him, gracious—  
Most gracious.



# BECKET

ACT II

*Enter BECKET, after him, JOHN OF OXFORD, ROGER OF YORK, GILBERT FOLIOT, DE BROU, FITZURSE, etc.*

Only that the rift he made  
May close between us, here I am wholly king,  
The word should come from him.

BECKET (*kneeling*). Then, my dear liege,  
I here deliver all this controversy  
Into your royal hands.

HENRY. Ah, Thomas, Thomas,  
Thou art thyself again, Thomas again.

BECKET (*rising*). Saving God's honour!

HENRY. Out upon thee, man!  
Saving the Devil's honour, his yes and no.  
Knights, bishops, earls, this London spawn—by  
Mahound,

I had sooner have been born a Mussulman—  
Less clashing with their priests—  
I am half-way down the slope—will no man stay  
me?

I dash myself to pieces—I stay myself—  
Puff—it is gone. You, Master Becket, you  
That owe to me your power over me—  
Nay, nay—

Brother of France, you have taken, cherish'd  
him  
Who thief-like fled from his own church by  
night,

No man pursuing. I would have had him back.  
Take heed he do not turn and rend you too:  
For whatsoever may displease him—that

Is clean against God's honour—a shift, a trick  
Whereby to challenge, face me out of all  
My regal rights. Yet, yet—that none may  
dream

I go against God's honour—ay, or himself  
In any reason, choose  
A hundred of the wisest heads from England,  
A hundred, too, from Normandy and Anjou:  
Let these decide on what was customary  
In olden days, and all the Church of France  
Decide on their decision, I am content.  
More, what the mightiest and the holiest  
Of all his predecessors may have done  
Ev'n to the least and meanest of my own,  
Let him do the same to me—I am content.

LOUIS. Ay, ay! the King humbles himself  
enough.

BECKET. (*Aside*) Words! he will wriggle  
out of them like an eel  
When the time serves. (*Aloud.*) My lieges and  
my lords,

The thanks of Holy Church are due to those  
That went before us for their work, which we  
Inheriting reap an easier harvest. Yet——

LOUIS. My lord, will you be greater than the  
Saints,  
More than St. Peter? whom——what is it you  
doubt?

Behold your peace at hand.

BECKET. I say that those  
Who went before us did not wholly clear

# BECKET

ACT II

The deadly growths of earth, which Hell's own  
heat

So dwelt on that they rose and darken'd Heaven.  
Yet they did much. Would God they had torn  
up all

By the hard root, which shoots again ; our trial  
Had so been less ; but, seeing they were men  
Defective or excessive, must we follow  
All that they overdid or underdid ?

Nay, if they were defective as St. Peter  
Denying Christ, who yet defied the tyrant,  
We hold by his defiance, not his defect.

O good son Louis, do not counsel me,  
No, to suppress God's honour for the sake  
Of any king that breathes. No, God forbid !

HENRY. No ! God forbid ! and turn me  
Mussulman !

No God but one, and Mahound is his prophet.  
But for your Christian, look you, you shall have  
None other God but me—me, Thomas, son  
Of Gilbert Becket, London merchant. Out !  
I hear no more. [Exit.

LOUIS. Our brother's anger puts him,  
Poor man, beside himself—not wise. My lord,  
We have claspt your cause, believing that our  
brother  
Had wrong'd you ; but this day he proffer'd  
peace.

You will have war ; and tho' we grant the  
Church  
King over this world's kings, yet, my good lord,

We that are kings are something in this world,  
And so we pray you, draw yourself from under  
The wings of France. We shelter you no more.

[*Exit.*

JOHN OF OXFORD. I am glad that France hath  
scouted him at last :  
I told the Pope what manner of man he was.

[*Exit.*

ROGER OF YORK. Yea, since he flouts the will  
of either realm,  
Let either cast him away like a dead dog !

[*Exit.*

FOLIOT. Yea, let a stranger spoil his heritage,  
And let another take his bishoprick !

[*Exit.*

DE BROC. Our castle, my lord, belongs to  
Canterbury.

I pray you come and take it.

[*Exit.*

FITZURSE. When you will.

[*Exit.*

BECKET. Cursed be John of Oxford, Roger  
of York,

And Gilbert Foliot ! cursed those De Brocs  
That hold our Saltwood Castle from our see !  
Cursed Fitzurse, and all the rest of them  
That sow this hate between my lord and me !

VOICES *from the CROWD.* Blessed be the Lord  
Archbishop, who hath withstood two Kings to  
their faces for the honour of God.

BECKET. Out of the mouths of babes and  
sucklings, praise !  
I thank you, sons ; when kings but hold by  
crowns,

The crowd that hungers for a crown in Heaven  
Is my true king.

HERBERT. Thy true King bad thee be  
A fisher of men ; thou hast them in thy net.

BECKET. I am too like the King here ; both  
of us

Too headlong for our office. Better have been  
A fisherman at Bosham, my good Herbert,  
Thy birthplace—the sea-creek—the petty rill  
That falls into it—the green field—the gray  
church—

The simple lobster-basket, and the mesh—  
The more or less of daily labour done—  
The pretty gaping bills in the home-nest  
Piping for bread—the daily want supplied—  
The daily pleasure to supply it.

HERBERT. Ah, Thomas,  
You had not borne it, no, not for a day.

BECKET. Well, maybe, no.

HERBERT. But bear with Walter Map,  
For here he comes to comment on the time.

*Enter WALTER MAP*

WALTER MAP. Pity, my lord, that you have  
quenched the warmth of France toward you,  
tho' His Holiness, after much smouldering and  
smoking, be kindled again upon your quarter.

BECKET. Ay, if he do not end in smoke  
again.

WALTER MAP. My lord, the fire, when first

kindled, said to the smoke, 'Go up, my son, straight to Heaven.' And the smoke said, 'I go'; but anon the North-east took and turned him South-west, then the South-west turned him North-east, and so of the other winds; but it was in him to go up straight if the time had been quieter. Your lordship affects the unwavering perpendicular; but His Holiness, pushed one way by the Empire and another by England, if he move at all, Heaven stay him, is fain to diagonalise.

HERBERT. Diagonalise! thou art a word-monger.

Our Thomas never will diagonalise.

Thou art a jester and a verse-maker.

Diagonalise!

WALTER MAP. Is the world any the worse for my verses if the Latin rhymes be rolled out from a full mouth? or any harm done to the people if my jest be in defence of the Truth?

BECKET. Ay, if the jest be so done that the people

Delight to wallow in the grossness of it,  
Till Truth herself be shamed of her defender.

*Non defensoribus istis*, Walter Map.

WALTER MAP. Is that my case? so if the city be sick, and I cannot call the kennel sweet, your lordship would suspend me from verse-writing, as you suspended yourself after sub-writing to the customs.

BECKET. I pray God pardon mine infirmity.

# BECKET

ACT II

WALTER MAP. Nay, my lord, take heart ; for tho' you suspended yourself, the Pope let you down again ; and tho' you suspend Foliot or another, the Pope will not leave them in suspense, for the Pope himself is always in suspense, like Mahound's coffin hung between heaven and earth—always in suspense, like the scales, till the weight of Germany or the gold of England brings one of them down to the dust—always in suspense, like the tail of the horologe—to and fro—tick-tack—we make the time, we keep the time, ay, and we serve the time ; for I have heard say that if you boxed the Pope's ears with a purse, you might stagger him, but he would pocket the purse. No saying of mine—Jocelyn of Salisbury. But the King hath bought half the College of Redhats. He warmed to you to-day, and you have chilled him again. Yet you both love God. Agree with him quickly again, even for the sake of the Church. My one grain of good counsel which you will not swallow. I hate a split between old friendships as I hate the dirty gap in the face of a Cistercian monk, that will swallow anything. Farewell. *[Exit.]*

BECKET. Map scoffs at Rome. I all but hold with Map.  
Save for myself no Rome were left in England,  
All had been his. Why should this Rome, this  
Rome,  
Still choose Barabbas rather than the Christ,

Absolve the left-hand thief and damn the right?  
Take fees of tyranny, wink at sacrilege,  
Which even Peter had not dared? condemn  
The blameless exile?—

HERBERT.                   Thee, thou holy Thomas!  
I would that thou hadst been the Holy Father.

BECKET. I would have done my most to  
    keep Rome holy,  
I would have made Rome know she still is  
    Rome—

Who stands aghast at her eternal self  
And shakes at mortal kings—her vacillation,  
Avarice, craft—O God, how many an innocent  
Has left his bones upon the way to Rome  
Unwept, uncared for. Yea—on mine own self  
The King had had no power except for Rome.  
'Tis not the King who is guilty of mine exile,  
But Rome, Rome, Rome!

HERBERT.                   My lord, I see this Louis  
Returning, ah! to drive thee from his realm.

BECKET. He said as much before. Thou art  
    no prophet,  
Nor yet a prophet's son.

HERBERT.                   Whatever he say,  
Deny not thou God's honour for a king.  
The King looks troubled.

*Re-enter KING LOUIS*

LOUIS.                   My dear lord Archbishop,  
I learn but now that those poor Poitevins,



That in thy cause were stirr'd against King  
Henry,

Have been, despite his kingly promise given  
To our own self of pardon, evilly used  
And put to pain. I have lost all trust in him.  
The Church alone hath eyes—and now I see  
That I was blind—suffer the phrase—surrendering  
God's honour to the pleasure of a man.

Forgive me and absolve me, holy father. [*Kneels.*]

BECKET. Son, I absolve thee in the name of  
God.

LOUIS (*rising*). Return to Sens, where we will  
care for you.

The wine and wealth of all our France are yours ;  
Rest in our realm, and be at peace with all.

[*Exeunt.*]

VOICES *from the CROWD*. Long live the good  
King Louis ! God bless the great Archbishop !

*Re-enter HENRY and JOHN OF OXFORD*

HENRY (*looking after KING LOUIS and BECKET*).  
Ay, there they go—both backs are turn'd

to me—

Why then I strike into my former path  
For England, crown young Henry there, and make  
Our waning Eleanor all but love me !

John,  
Thou hast served me heretofore with Rome—  
and well.

They call thee John the Swearer.

JOHN OF OXFORD. For this reason,  
That, being ever duteous to the King,  
I evermore have sworn upon his side,  
And ever mean to do it.

HENRY (*claps him on the shoulder*). Honest  
John!  
To Rome again ! the storm begins again.  
Spare not thy tongue ! be lavish with our coins,  
Threaten our junction with the Emperor—flatter  
And fright the Pope—bribe all the Cardinals—  
leave  
Lateran and Vatican in one dust of gold—  
Swear and unswear, state and misstate thy best !  
I go to have young Henry crown'd by York.

## ACT III

### SCENE I.—THE BOWER

HENRY *and* ROSAMUND

HENRY. All that you say is just. I cannot answer it

Till better times, when I shall put away——

ROSAMUND. What will you put away ?

HENRY. That which you ask me  
Till better times. Let it content you now  
There is no woman that I love so well.

ROSAMUND. No woman but should be content with that——

HENRY. And one fair child to fondle !

ROSAMUND. O yes, the child  
We waited for so long—heaven's gift at last—  
And how you doated on him then ! To-day  
I almost fear'd your kiss was colder—yes—  
But then the child *is* such a child. What chance  
That he should ever spread into the man  
Here in our silence ? I have done my best.  
I am not learn'd.

HENRY. I am the King, his father,

And I will look to it. Is our secret ours?  
Have you had any alarm? no stranger?

ROSAMUND.

No.

The warder of the bower hath given himself  
Of late to wine. I sometimes think he sleeps  
When he should watch; and yet what fear? the  
people

Believe the wood enchanted. No one comes,  
Nor foe nor friend; his fond excess of wine  
Springs from the loneliness of my poor bower,  
Which weighs even on me.

HENRY.

Yet these tree-towers,  
Their long bird-echoing minster-aisles,—the  
voice

Of the perpetual brook, these golden slopes  
Of Solomon-shaming flowers—that was your  
saying,

All pleased you so at first.

ROSAMUND.

Not now so much.

My Anjou bower was scarce as beautiful.  
But you were oftener there. I have none but you.  
The brook's voice is not yours, and no flower,  
not

The sun himself, should he be changed to one,  
Could shine away the darkness of that gap  
Left by the lack of love.

HENRY.

The lack of love!

ROSAMUND. Of one we love. Nay, I would  
not be bold,

Yet hoped ere this you might——

[*Looks earnestly at him.*]

# BECKET

ACT III

HENRY. Anything further ?

ROSAMUND. Only my best bower-maiden  
died of late,  
And that old priest whom John of Salisbury  
trusted  
Hath sent another.

HENRY. Secret ?

ROSAMUND. I but ask'd her  
One question, and she primm'd her mouth and  
put  
Her hands together—thus—and said, God help  
her,  
That she was sworn to silence.

HENRY. What did you ask her ?

ROSAMUND. Some daily something-nothing.

HENRY. Secret, then ?

ROSAMUND. I do not love her. Must you  
go, my liege,  
So suddenly ?

HENRY. I came to England suddenly,  
And on a great occasion sure to wake  
As great a wrath in Becket——

ROSAMUND. Always Becket !  
He always comes between us.

HENRY. —And to meet it  
I needs must leave as suddenly. It is raining,  
Put on your hood and see me to the bounds.

[*Exeunt.*]

MARGERY (*singing behind scene*).

Babble in bower  
Under the rose !

## BECKET

Bee mustn't buzz,  
Whoop—but he knows.

Kiss me, little one,  
Nobody near !  
Grasshopper, grasshopper,  
Whoop—you can hear.

Kiss in the bower,  
Tit on the tree !  
Bird mustn't tell,  
Whoop—he can see.

*Enter MARGERY*

I ha' been but a week here and I ha' seen what I ha' seen, for to be sure it's no more than a week since our old Father Philip that has confessed our mother for twenty years, and she was hard put to it, and to speak truth, nigh at the end of our last crust, and that mouldy, and she cried out on him to put me forth in the world and to make me a woman of the world, and to win my own bread, whereupon he asked our mother if I could keep a quiet tongue i' my head, and not speak till I was spoke to, and I answered for myself that I never spoke more than was needed, and he told me he would advance me to the service of a great lady, and took me ever so far away, and gave me a great pat o' the cheek for a pretty wench, and said it was a pity to blindfold such eyes as mine, and

such to be sure they be, but he blinded 'em for all that, and so brought me no-hows as I may say, and the more shame to him after his promise, into a garden and not into the world, and bad me whatever I saw not to speak one word, an' it 'ud be well for me in the end, for there were great ones who would look after me, and to be sure I ha' seen great ones to-day—and then not to speak one word, for that's the rule o' the garden, tho' to be sure if I had been Eve i' the garden I shouldn't ha' minded the apple, for what's an apple, you know, save to a child, and I'm no child, but more a woman o' the world than my lady here, and I ha' seen what I ha' seen—tho' to be sure if I hadn't minded it we should all on us ha' had to go, bless the Saints, wi' bare backs, but the backs 'ud ha' countenanced one another, and belike it 'ud ha' been always summer, and anyhow I am as well-shaped as my lady here, and I ha' seen what I ha' seen, and what's the good of my talking to myself, for here comes my lady (*enter ROSAMUND*), and, my lady, tho' I shouldn't speak one word, I wish you joy o' the King's brother.

ROSAMUND. What is it you mean?

MARGERY. I mean your goodman, your husband, my lady, for I saw your ladyship a-parting wi' him even now i' the coppice, when I was a-getting o' bluebells for your ladyship's nose to smell on—and I ha' seen the King once at Oxford, and he's as like the

King as fingernail to fingernail, and I thought at first it was the King, only you know the King's married, for King Louis——

ROSAMUND. Married!

MARGERY. Years and years, my lady, for her husband, King Louis——

ROSAMUND. Hush!

MARGERY. —And I thought if it were the King's brother he had a better bride than the King, for the people do say that his is bad beyond all reckoning, and——

ROSAMUND. The people lie.

MARGERY. Very like, my lady, but most on 'em know an honest woman and a lady when they see her, and besides they say, she makes songs, and that's against her, for I never knew an honest woman that could make songs, tho' to be sure our mother 'ill sing me old songs by the hour, but then, God help her, she had 'em from her mother, and her mother from her mother back and back for ever so long, but none on 'em ever made songs, and they were all honest.

ROSAMUND. Go, you shall tell me of her some other time.

MARGERY. There's none so much to tell on her, my lady, only she kept the seventh commandment better than some I know on, or I couldn't look your ladyship i' the face, and she brew'd the best ale in all Glo'ster, that is to say in her time when she had the 'Crown.'



ROSAMUND. The crown ! who ?

MARGERY. Mother.

ROSAMUND. I mean her whom you call—fancy—my husband's brother's wife.

MARGERY. Oh, Queen Eleanor. Yes, my lady ; and tho' I be sworn not to speak a word, I can tell you all about her, if——

ROSAMUND. No word now. I am faint and sleepy. Leave me. Nay—go. What ! will you anger me ?

[*Exit MARGERY.*

He charged me not to question any of those  
About me. Have I ? no ! she question'd *me*.  
Did she not slander *him* ? Should she stay here ?  
May she not tempt me, being at my side,  
To question *her* ? Nay, can I send her hence  
Without his kingly leave ? I am in the dark.  
I have lived, poor bird, from cage to cage, and  
known

Nothing but him—happy to know no more,  
So that he loved me—and he loves me—yes,  
And bound me by his love to secrecy  
Till his own time.

Eleanor, Eleanor, have I  
Not heard ill things of her in France ? Oh,  
she's

The Queen of France. I see it—some confusion,  
Some strange mistake. I did not hear aright,  
Myself confused with parting from the King.

MARGERY (*behind scene*).

Bee mustn't buzz,

Whoop—but he knows.

ROSAMUND. Yet her—what her? he hinted  
of some her—  
When he was here before—  
Something that would displease me. Hath he  
stray'd  
From love's clear path into the common bush,  
And, being scratch'd, returns to his true rose,  
Who hath not thorn enough to prick him for it,  
Ev'n with a word?

MARGERY (*behind scene*).

Bird mustn't tell,  
Whoop—he can see.

ROSAMUND. I would not hear him. Nay—  
there's more—he frown'd  
'No mate for her, if it should come to that'—  
To that—to what?

MARGERY (*behind scene*).

Whoop—but he knows,  
Whoop—but he knows.

ROSAMUND. O God! some dreadful truth is  
breaking on me—  
Some dreadful thing is coming on me.

[*Enter* GEOFFREY. Geoffrey!

GEOFFREY. What are you crying for, when  
the sun shines?

ROSAMUND. Hath not thy father left us to  
ourselves?

GEOFFREY. Ay, but he's taken the rain with  
him. I hear Margery: I'll go play with her.

[*Exit* GEOFFREY.]

# BECKET

ACT III

ROSAMUND. Rainbow, stay,  
Gleam upon gloom,  
Bright as my dream,  
Rainbow, stay !  
But it passes away,  
Gloom upon gleam,  
Dark as my doom—  
O rainbow stay.

## SCENE II

OUTSIDE THE WOODS NEAR ROSAMUND'S BOWER

ELEANOR. FITZURSE.

ELEANOR. Up from the salt lips of the land  
we two  
Have track'd the King to this dark inland wood ;  
And somewhere hereabouts he vanish'd. Here  
His turtle builds ; his exit is our adit :  
Watch ! he will out again, and presently,  
Seeing he must to Westminster and crown  
Young Henry there to-morrow.

FITZURSE. We have watch'd  
So long in vain, he hath pass'd out again,  
And on the other side. [*A great horn winded.*  
Hark ! Madam !

ELEANOR. Ay,  
How ghostly sounds that horn in the black  
wood ! [*A COUNTRYMAN flying.*

Whither away, man? what are you flying from?

COUNTRYMAN. The witch! the witch! she sits naked by a great heap of gold in the middle of the wood, and when the horn sounds she comes out as a wolf. Get you hence! a man passed in there to-day: I holla'd to him, but he didn't hear me: he'll never out again, the witch has got him. I daren't stay—I daren't stay!

ELEANOR. Kind of the witch to give thee warning tho'. *[Man flies.]*

Is not this wood-witch of the rustic's fear  
Our woodland Circe that hath witch'd the King?  
*[Horn sounded. Another flying.]*

FITZURSE. Again! stay, fool, and tell me why thou fliest.

COUNTRYMAN. Fly thou too. The King keeps his forest head of game here, and when that horn sounds, a score of wolf-dogs are let loose that will tear thee piecemeal. Linger not till the third horn. Fly! *[Exit.]*

ELEANOR. This is the likelier tale. We have hit the place.  
Now let the King's fine game look to itself.  
*[Horn.]*

FITZURSE. Again!—  
And far on in the dark heart of the wood  
I hear the yelping of the hounds of hell.

ELEANOR. I have my dagger here to still their throats.

# BECKET

ACT III

FITZURSE. Nay, Madam, not to-night—the night is falling.

What can be done to-night ?

ELEANOR.

Well—well—away.

## SCENE III

TRAITOR'S MEADOW AT FRÉTEVAL. PAVILIONS AND TENTS OF THE ENGLISH AND FRENCH BARONAGE.

BECKET *and* HERBERT OF BOSHAM

BECKET. See here !

HERBERT. What's here ?

BECKET. A notice from the priest,  
To whom our John of Salisbury committed  
The secret of the bower, that our wolf-Queen  
Is prowling round the fold. I should be back  
In England ev'n for this.

HERBERT. These are by-things  
In the great cause.

BECKET. The by-things of the Lord  
Are the wrong'd innocences that will cry  
From all the hidden by-ways of the world  
In the great day against the wronger. I know  
Thy meaning. Perish she, I, all, before  
The Church should suffer wrong !

HERBERT. Do you see, my lord,  
There is the King talking with Walter Map ?

BECKET. He hath the Pope's last letters, and  
they threaten

The immediate thunder-blast of interdict :  
Yet he can scarce be touching upon those,  
Or scarce would smile that fashion.

HERBERT.

Winter sunshine !

Beware of opening out thy bosom to it,  
Lest thou, myself, and all thy flock should catch  
An after ague-fit of trembling. Look !  
He bows, he bares his head, he is coming hither.  
Still with a smile.

*Enter KING HENRY and WALTER MAP*

HENRY. We have had so many hours together,  
Thomas,  
So many happy hours alone together,  
That I would speak with you once more alone.

BECKET. My liege, your will and happiness  
are mine.

*[Exeunt KING and BECKET.]*

HERBERT. The same smile still.

WALTER MAP. Do you see that great black  
cloud that hath come over the sun and cast us  
all into shadow ?

HERBERT. And feel it too.

WALTER MAP. And see you yon side-beam  
that is forced from under it, and sets the church-  
tower over there all a-hell-fire as it were ?

HERBERT. Ay.

WALTER MAP. It is this black, bell-silencing,  
anti-marrying, burial-hindering interdict that  
hath squeezed out this side-smile upon Canter-  
bury, whereof may come conflagration. Were

I Thomas, I wouldn't trust it. Sudden change is a house on sand; and tho' I count Henry honest enough, yet when fear creeps in at the front, honesty steals out at the back, and the King at last is fairly scared by this cloud—this interdict. I have been more for the King than the Church in this matter—yea, even for the sake of the Church: for, truly, as the case stood, you had safelier have slain an archbishop than a she-goat: but our recoverer and upholder of customs hath in this crowning of young Henry by York and London so violated the immemorial usage of the Church, that, like the gravedigger's child I have heard of, trying to ring the bell, he hath half-hanged himself in the rope of the Church, or rather pulled all the Church with the Holy Father astride of it down upon his own head.

HERBERT. Were you there?

WALTER MAP. In the church rope?—no. I was at the crowning, for I have pleasure in the pleasure of crowds, and to read the faces of men at a great show.

HERBERT. And how did Roger of York comport himself?

WALTER MAP. As magnificently and archiepiscopally as our Thomas would have done: only there was a dare-devil in his eye—I should say a dare-Becket. He thought less of two kings than of one Roger the king of the occasion. Foliot is the holier man, perhaps the better.

Once or twice there ran a twitch across his face as who should say what's to follow? but Salisbury was a calf cowed by Mother Church, and every now and then glancing about him like a thief at night when he hears a door open in the house and thinks 'the master.'

HERBERT. And the father-king?

WALTER MAP. The father's eye was so tender it would have called a goose off the green, and once he strove to hide his face, like the Greek king when his daughter was sacrificed, but he thought better of it: it was but the sacrifice of a kingdom to his son, a smaller matter; but as to the young crownling himself, he looked so malapert in the eyes, that had I fathered him I had given him more of the rod than the sceptre. Then followed the thunder of the captains and the shouting, and so we came on to the banquet, from whence there puffed out such an incense of unctuousity into the nostrils of our Gods of Church and State, that Lucullus or Apicius might have sniffed it in their Hades of heathenism, so that the smell of their own roast had not come across it——

HERBERT. Map, tho' you make your butt too big, you overshoot it.

WALTER MAP. —For as to the fish, they de-miracled the miraculous draught, and might have sunk a navy——

HERBERT. There again, Goliassing and Goliathising!



WALTER MAP. —And as for the flesh at table, a whole Peter's sheet, with all manner of game, and four-footed things, and fowls——

HERBERT. And all manner of creeping things too ?

WALTER MAP. —Well, there were Abbots—but they did not bring their women ; and so we were dull enough at first, but in the end we flourished out into a merriment ; for the old King would act servitor and hand a dish to his son ; whereupon my Lord of York—his fine-cut face bowing and beaming with all that courtesy which hath less loyalty in it than the backward scrape of the clown's heel—'great honour,' says he, 'from the King's self to the King's son.' Did you hear the young King's quip ?

HERBERT. No, what was it ?

WALTER MAP. Glancing at the days when his father was only Earl of Anjou, he answered : —'Should not an earl's son wait on a king's son ?' And when the cold corners of the King's mouth began to thaw, there was a great motion of laughter among us, part real, part childlike, to be freed from the dulness—part royal, for King and kingling both laughed, and so we could not but laugh, as by a royal necessity—part childlike again—when we felt we had laughed too long and could not stay ourselves—many midriff-shaken even to tears, as springs gush out after earthquakes—but from those, as I said before, there may come a conflagration—

tho', to keep the figure moist and make it hold water, I should say rather, the lacrymation of a lamentation; but look if Thomas have not flung himself at the King's feet. They have made it up again—for the moment.

HERBERT. Thanks to the blessed Magdalen, whose day it is.

*Re-enter HENRY and BECKET. (During their conference the BARONS and BISHOPS of FRANCE and ENGLAND come in at back of stage.)*

BECKET. Ay, King! for in thy kingdom, as thou knowest,  
The spouse of the Great King, thy King, hath fallen—

The daughter of Zion lies beside the way—  
The priests of Baal tread her underfoot—  
The golden ornaments are stolen from her——

HENRY. Have I not promised to restore her,  
Thomas,  
And send thee back again to Canterbury?

BECKET. Send back again those exiles of my kin  
Who wander famine-wasted thro' the world.

HENRY. Have I not promised, man, to send them back?

BECKET. Yet one thing more. Thou hast broken thro' the pales  
Of privilege, crowning thy young son by York,  
London and Salisbury—not Canterbury.

HENRY. York crown'd the Conqueror—not  
Canterbury.

BECKET. There was no Canterbury in  
William's time.

HENRY. But Hereford, you know, crown'd  
the first Henry.

BECKET. But Anselm crown'd this Henry  
o'er again.

HENRY. And thou shalt crown my Henry  
o'er again.

BECKET. And is it then with thy good-will  
that I

Proceed against thine evil councillors,  
And hurl the dread ban of the Church on those  
Who made the second mitre play the first,  
And acted me ?

HENRY. Well, well, then—have thy way !  
It may be they were evil councillors.  
What more, my lord Archbishop ? What more,  
Thomas ?

I make thee full amends. Say all thy say,  
But blaze not out before the Frenchmen here.

BECKET. More ? Nothing, so thy promise  
be thy deed.

HENRY (*holding out his hand*). Give me thy  
hand. My Lords of France and England,  
My friend of Canterbury and myself  
Are now once more at perfect amity.  
Unkingly should I be, and most unknighly,  
Not striving still, however much in vain,  
To rival him in Christian charity.

HERBERT. All praise to Heaven, and sweet  
St. Magdalen !

HENRY. And so farewell until we meet in  
England.

BECKET. I fear, my liege, we may not meet  
in England.

HENRY. How, do you make me a traitor ?

BECKET. No, indeed !

That be far from thee.

HENRY. Come, stay with us, then,  
Before you part for England.

BECKET. I am bound  
For that one hour to stay with good King Louis,  
Who helpt me when none else.

HERBERT. He said thy life  
Was not one hour's worth in England save  
King Henry gave thee first the kiss of peace.

HENRY. He said so ? Louis, did he ? look  
you, Herbert,  
When I was in mine anger with King Louis,  
I sware I would not give the kiss of peace,  
Not on French ground, nor any ground but  
English,  
Where his cathedral stands. Mine old friend,  
Thomas,

I would there were that perfect trust between us,  
That health of heart, once ours, ere Pope or  
King  
Had come between us ! Even now — who  
knows ?—

I might deliver all things to thy hand—

If . . . but I say no more . . . farewell, my lord.

BECKET. Farewell, my liege !

[*Exit HENRY, then the BARONS and BISHOPS.*]

WALTER MAP. There again ! when the full fruit of the royal promise might have dropt into thy mouth hadst thou but opened it to thank him.

BECKET. He fenced his royal promise with an *if*.

WALTER MAP. And is the King's *if* too high a stile for your lordship to overstep and come at all things in the next field ?

BECKET. Ay, if this *if* be like the Devil's '*if* Thou wilt fall down and worship me.'

HERBERT. Oh, Thomas, I could fall down and worship thee, my Thomas, For thou hast trodden this wine-press alone.

BECKET. Nay, of the people there are many with me.

WALTER MAP. I am not altogether with you, my lord, tho' I am none of those that would raise a storm between you, lest ye should draw together like two ships in a calm. You wrong the King : he meant what he said to-day. Who shall vouch for his to-morrows ? One word further. Doth not the *fewness* of anything make the fulness of it in estimation ? Is not virtue prized mainly for its rarity and great baseness loathed as an exception : for were all, my lord, as noble as yourself, who would look up to you ?

and were all as base as—who shall I say—Fitzurse and his following—who would look down upon them? My lord, you have put so many of the King's household out of communion, that they begin to smile at it.

BECKET. At their peril, at their peril——

WALTER MAP. —For tho' the drop may hollow out the dead stone, doth not the living skin thicken against perpetual whippings? This is the second grain of good counsel I ever proffered thee, and so cannot suffer by the rule of frequency. Have I sown it in salt? I trust not, for before God I promise you the King hath many more wolves than he can tame in his woods of England, and if it suit their purpose to howl for the King, and you still move against him, you may have no less than to die for it; but God and his free wind grant your lordship a happy home-return and the King's kiss of peace in Kent. Farewell! I must follow the King. [*Exit.*]

HERBERT. Ay, and I warrant the customs.

Did the King  
Speak of the customs?

BECKET. No!—To die for it—  
I live to die for it, I die to live for it.  
The State will die, the Church can never die.  
The King's not like to die for that which dies;  
But I must die for that which never dies.  
It will be so—my visions in the Lord:  
It must be so, my friend! the wolves of England  
Must murder her one shepherd, that the sheep

## BECKET

ACT III

May feed in peace. False figure, Map would say.  
Earth's falses are heaven's truths. And when my  
voice

Is martyr'd mute, and this man disappears,  
That perfect trust may come again between us,  
And there, there, there, not here I shall rejoice  
To find my stray sheep back within the fold.  
The crowd are scattering, let us move away !  
And thence to England. *[Exeunt.]*

## ACT IV

### SCENE I.—THE OUTSKIRTS OF THE BOWER

GEOFFREY (*coming out of the wood*). Light again! light again! Margery? no, that's a finer thing there. How it glitters!

ELEANOR (*entering*). Come to me, little one. How camest thou hither?

GEOFFREY. On my legs.

ELEANOR. And mighty pretty legs too. Thou art the prettiest child I ever saw. Wilt thou love me?

GEOFFREY. No; I only love mother.

ELEANOR. Ay; and who is thy mother?

GEOFFREY. They call her—— But she lives secret, you see.

ELEANOR. Why?

GEOFFREY. Don't know why.

ELEANOR. Ay, but some one comes to see her now and then. Who is he?

GEOFFREY. Can't tell.

ELEANOR. What does she call him?

GEOFFREY. My liege.



## BECKET

ACT IV

ELEANOR. Pretty one, how camest thou ?

GEOFFREY. There was a bit of yellow silk here and there, and it looked pretty like a glow-worm, and I thought if I followed it I should find the fairies.

ELEANOR. I am the fairy, pretty one, a good fairy to thy mother. Take me to her.

GEOFFREY. There are good fairies and bad fairies, and sometimes she cries, and can't sleep sound o' nights because of the bad fairies.

ELEANOR. She shall cry no more ; she shall sleep sound enough if thou wilt take me to her. I am her good fairy.

GEOFFREY. But you don't look like a good fairy. Mother does. You are not pretty, like mother.

ELEANOR. We can't all of us be as pretty as thou art—(*aside*) little bastard. Come, here is a golden chain I will give thee if thou wilt lead me to thy mother.

GEOFFREY. No—no gold. Mother says gold spoils all. Love is the only gold.

ELEANOR. I love thy mother, my pretty boy. Show me where thou camest out of the wood.

GEOFFREY. By this tree ; but I don't know if I can find the way back again.

ELEANOR. Where's the warder ?

GEOFFREY. Very bad. Somebody struck him.

ELEANOR. Ay ? who was that ?

GEOFFREY. Can't tell. But I heard say he had had a stroke, or you'd have heard his horn

before now. Come along, then ; we shall see the silk here and there, and I want my supper.

[*Exeunt.*

## SCENE II

## ROSAMUND'S BOWER

ROSAMUND. The boy so late ; pray God, he  
be not lost.

I sent this Margery, and she comes not back ;  
I sent another, and she comes not back.  
I go myself—so many alleys, crossings,  
Paths, avenues—nay, if I lost him, now  
The folds have fallen from the mystery,  
And left all naked, I were lost indeed.

*Enter GEOFFREY and ELEANOR*

Geoffrey, the pain thou hast put me to !

[*Seeing* ELEANOR.

Ha, you !

How came you hither ?

ELEANOR. Your own child brought me hither !

GEOFFREY. You said you couldn't trust Margery, and I watched her and followed her into the woods, and I lost her and went on and on till I found the light and the lady, and she says she can make you sleep o' nights.

ROSAMUND. How dared you ? Know you  
not this bower is secret,

# BECKET

ACT IV

Of and belonging to the King of England,  
More sacred than his forests for the chase?  
Nay, nay, Heaven help you; get you hence in  
haste

Lest worse befall you.

ELEANOR. Child, I am mine own self  
Of and belonging to the King. The King  
Hath divers ofs and ons, ofs and belongings,  
Almost as many as your true Mussulman—  
Belongings, paramours, whom it pleases him  
To call his wives; but so it chances, child,  
That I am his main paramour, his sultana.  
But since the fondest pair of doves will jar,  
Ev'n in a cage of gold, we had words of late,  
And thereupon he call'd my children bastards.  
Do you believe that you are married to him?

ROSAMUND. I *should* believe it.

ELEANOR. You must not believe it,  
Because I have a wholesome medicine here  
Puts that belief asleep. Your answer, beauty!  
Do you believe that you are married to him?

ROSAMUND. Geoffrey, my boy, I saw the ball  
you lost in the fork of the great willow over  
the brook. Go. See that you do not fall in.  
Go.

GEOFFREY. And leave you alone with the  
good fairy. She calls you beauty, but I don't like  
her looks. Well, you bid me go, and I'll have  
my ball anyhow. Shall I find you asleep when  
I come back?

ROSAMUND. Go.

[*Exit* GEOFFREY.]

ELEANOR. He is easily found again. *Do you believe it?*

I pray you then to take my sleeping-draught ;  
But if you should not care to take it—see!

*[Draws a dagger.]*

What ! have I scared the red rose from your  
face

Into your heart ? But this will find it there,  
And dig it from the root for ever.

ROSAMUND. Help ! help !

ELEANOR. They say that walls have ears ;  
but these, it seems,

Have none ! and I have none—to pity thee.

ROSAMUND. I do beseech you—my child is so  
young,

So backward too ; I cannot leave him yet.

I am not so happy I could not die myself,

But the child is so young. You have children—  
his ;

And mine is the King's child ; so, if you love  
him—

Nay, if you love him, there is great wrong done

Somehow ; but if you do not—there are those

Who say you do not love him—let me go

With my young boy, and I will hide my face,

Blacken and gipsyfy it ; none shall know me ;

The King shall never hear of me again,

But I will beg my bread along the world

With my young boy, and God will be our guide.

I never meant you harm in any way.

See, I can say no more.

# BECKET

ACT IV

ELEANOR. Will you not say you are not married to him ?

ROSAMUND. Ay, Madam, I can *say* it, if you will.

ELEANOR. Then is thy pretty boy a bastard ?

ROSAMUND. No.

ELEANOR. And thou thyself a proven wanton ?

ROSAMUND. No.

I am none such. I never loved but one.

I have heard of such that range from love to love,  
Like the wild beast—if you can call it love.

I have heard of such—yea, even among those

Who sit on thrones—I never saw any such,

Never knew any such, and howsoever

You do misname me, match'd with any such,

I am snow to mud.

ELEANOR. The more the pity then  
That thy true home—the heavens—cry out for  
thee

Who art too pure for earth.

*Enter FITZURSE*

FITZURSE. Give her to me.

ELEANOR. The Judas-lover of our passion-play  
Hath track'd us hither.

FITZURSE. Well, why not? I follow'd  
You and the child : he babbled all the way.  
Give her to me to make my honeymoon.

ELEANOR. Ay, as the bears love honey. Could  
you keep her

Indungeon'd from one whisper of the wind,  
Dark even from a side glance of the moon,  
And oublietted in the centre—No !

I follow out my hate and thy revenge.

FITZURSE. You bad me take revenge another  
way—

To bring her to the dust. . . . Come with me,  
love,

And I will love thee. . . . Madam, let her live.

I have a far-off burrow where the King

Would miss her and for ever.

ELEANOR. How sayst thou, sweetheart ?  
Wilt thou go with him ? he will marry thee.

ROSAMUND. Give me the poison ; set me free  
of him ! [ELEANOR offers the vial.

No, no ! I will not have it.

ELEANOR. Then this other,  
The wiser choice, because my sleeping-draught  
May bloat thy beauty out of shape, and make  
Thy body loathsome even to thy child ;  
While this but leaves thee with a broken heart,  
A doll-face blanch'd and bloodless, over which  
If pretty Geoffrey do not break his own,  
It must be broken for him.

ROSAMUND. O I see now  
Your purpose is to fright me—a troubadour  
You play with words. You had never used so  
many,  
Not if you meant it, I am sure. The child . . .  
No . . . mercy ! No ! (*Kneels.*)

ELEANOR. Play ! . . . that bosom never

Heaved under the King's hand with such true  
passion

As at this loveless knife that stirs the riot,  
Which it will quench in blood ! Slave, if he  
love thee,

Thy life is worth the wrestle for it : arise,  
And dash thyself against me that I may slay  
thee !

The worm ! shall I let her go ? But ha ! what's  
here ?

By very God, the cross I gave the King !  
His village darling in some lewd caress  
Has wheedled it off the King's neck to her own.  
By thy leave, beauty. Ay, the same ! I warrant  
Thou hast sworn on this my cross a hundred  
times

Never to leave him—and that merits death,  
False oath on holy cross—for thou must leave  
him

To-day, but not quite yet. My good Fitzurse,  
The running down the chase is kindlier sport  
Ev'n than the death. Who knows but that thy  
lover

May plead so pitifully, that I may spare thee ?  
Come hither, man ; stand there. (*To ROSAMUND*)  
Take thy one chance ;

Catch at the last straw. Kneel to thy lord  
Fitzurse ;

Crouch even because thou hatest him ; fawn  
upon him

For thy life and thy son's.

ROSAMUND (*rising*). I am a Clifford,  
My son a Clifford and Plantagenet.  
I am to die then, tho' there stand beside thee  
One who might grapple with thy dagger, if he  
Had aught of man, or thou of woman ; or I  
Would bow to such a baseness as would make me  
Most worthy of it : both of us will die,  
And I will fly with my sweet boy to heaven,  
And shriek to all the saints among the stars :  
' Eleanor of Aquitaine, Eleanor of England !  
Murder'd by that adulteress Eleanor,  
Whose doings are a horror to the east,  
A hissing in the west ! ' Have we not heard  
Raymond of Poitou, thine own uncle—nay,  
Geoffrey Plantagenet, thine own husband's  
father—  
Nay, ev'n the accursed heathen Saladdeen——  
Strike !  
I challenge thee to meet me before God.  
Answer me there.

ELEANOR (*raising the dagger*). This in thy  
bosom, fool,  
And after in thy bastard's !

*Enter BECKET from behind. Catches hold of her arm.*

BECKET. Murderess !

[*The dagger falls ; they stare at one another.*  
*After a pause.*

ELEANOR. My lord, we know you proud of  
your fine hand,



But having now admired it long enough,  
We find that it is mightier than it seems—  
At least mine own is frailer : you are laming it.

BECKET. And lamed and maim'd to dislocation, better

Than raised to take a life which Henry bad me  
Guard from the stroke that dooms thee after  
death

To wail in deathless flame.

ELEANOR. Nor you, nor I  
Have now to learn, my lord, that our good  
Henry

Says many a thing in sudden heats, which he  
Gainsays by next sunrising—often ready  
To tear himself for having said as much.  
My lord, Fitzurse——

BECKET. He too ! what dost thou here ?  
Dares the bear slouch into the lion's den ?  
One downward plunge of his paw would rend  
away

Eyesight and manhood, life itself, from thee.  
Go, lest I blast thee with anathema,  
And make thee a world's horror.

FITZURSE. My lord, I shall  
Remember this.

BECKET. I *do* remember thee ;  
Lest I remember thee to the lion, go.

[*Exit* FITZURSE.]

Take up your dagger ; put in the sheath.

ELEANOR. Might not your courtesy stoop to  
hand it me ?

But crowns must bow when mitres sit so high.  
Well—well—too costly to be left or lost.

*[Picks up the dagger.]*

I had it from an Arab soldan, who,  
When I was there in Antioch, marvell'd at  
Our unfamiliar beauties of the west ;  
But wonder'd more at my much constancy  
To the monk-king, Louis, our former burthen,  
From whom, as being too kin, you know, my  
lord,

God's grace and Holy Church deliver'd us.  
I think, time given, I could have talk'd him  
out of

His ten wives into one. Look at the hilt.  
What excellent workmanship. In our poor  
west

We cannot do it so well.

BECKET.

We can do worse.

Madam, I saw your dagger at her throat ;  
I heard your savage cry.

ELEANOR.

Well acted, was it ?

A comedy meant to seem a tragedy—  
A feint, a farce. My honest lord, you are known  
Thro' all the courts of Christendom as one  
That mars a cause with over-violence.  
You have wrong'd Fitzurse. I speak not of  
myself.

We thought to scare this minion of the King  
Back from her churchless commerce with the  
King

To the fond arms of her first love, Fitzurse,

Who swore to marry her. You have spoilt the farce.

My savage cry ? Why, she—she—when I strove

To work against her license for her good,  
Bark'd out at me such monstrous charges, that  
The King himself, for love of his own sons,  
If hearing, would have spurn'd her ; whereupon  
I menaced her with this, as when we threaten  
A yelper with a stick. Nay, I deny not  
That I was somewhat anger'd. Do you hear me ?

Believe or no, I care not. You have lost  
The ear of the King. I have it. . . . My lord  
Paramount,

Our great High-priest, will not your Holiness  
Vouchsafe a gracious answer to your Queen ?

BECKET. Rosamund hath not answer'd you  
one word ;

Madam, I will not answer you one word.

Daughter, the world hath trick'd thee. Leave  
it, daughter ;

Come thou with me to Godstow nunnery,  
And live what may be left thee of a life  
Saved as by miracle alone with Him  
Who gave it.

*Re-enter GEOFFREY*

GEOFFREY. Mother, you told me a great fib :  
it wasn't in the willow.

BECKET. Follow us, my son, and we will find  
it for thee—

Or something manlier.

[*Exeunt* BECKET, ROSAMUND, and GEOFFREY.]

ELEANOR. The world hath trick'd her—that's  
the King ; if so,

There was the farce, the feint—not mine. And  
yet

I am all but sure my dagger was a feint  
Till the worm turn'd—not life shot up in blood,  
But death drawn in ;—(*looking at the vial*) *this*  
was no feint then ? no.

But can I swear to that, had she but given  
Plain answer to plain query ? nay, methinks  
Had she but bow'd herself to meet the wave  
Of humiliation, worshipt whom she loathed,  
I should have let her be, scorn'd her too much  
To harm her. Henry—Becket tells him this—  
To take my life might lose him Aquitaine.

Too politic for that. Imprison me ?

No, for it came to nothing—only a feint.

Did she not tell me I was playing on her ?

I'll swear to mine own self it was a feint.

Why should I swear, Eleanor, who am, or was,  
A sovereign power ? The King plucks out  
their eyes

Who anger him, and shall not I, the Queen,  
Tear out her heart—kill, kill with knife or  
venom

One of his slanderous harlots ? 'None of such ?'  
I love her none the more. Tut, the chance gone,

She lives—but not for him ; one point is gain'd.  
O I, that thro' the Pope divorced King Louis,  
Scorning his monkery,—I that wedded Henry,  
Honouring his manhood—will he not mock at  
me

The jealous fool balk'd of her will—with *him* ?  
But he and he must never meet again.  
Reginald Fitzurse !

*Re-enter FITZURSE*

FITZURSE. Here, Madam, at your pleasure.

ELEANOR. My pleasure is to have a man  
about me.

Why did you slink away so like a cur ?

FITZURSE. Madam, I am as much man as  
the King.

Madam, I fear Church-censures like your King.

ELEANOR. He grovels to the Church when  
he's black-blooded,

But kinglike fought the proud archbishop,—  
kinglike

Defied the Pope, and, like his kingly sires,  
The Normans, striving still to break or bind  
The spiritual giant with our island laws  
And customs, made me for the moment proud  
Ev'n of that stale Church-bond which link'd me  
with him

To bear him kingly sons. I am not so sure  
But that I love him still. Thou as much man !  
No more of that ; we will to France and be

Beforehand with the King, and brew from out  
This Godstow-Becket intermeddling such  
A strong hate-philtre as may madden him—  
                  madden  
Against his priest beyond all hellebore.

ACT V

SCENE I.—CASTLE IN NORMANDY. KING'S  
CHAMBER.

HENRY, ROGER OF YORK, FOLIOT, JOCELYN  
OF SALISBURY

ROGER OF YORK. Nay, nay, my liege,  
He rides abroad with armed followers,  
Hath broken all his promises to thyself,  
Cursed and anathematised us right and left,  
Stirr'd up a party there against your son—

HENRY. Roger of York, you always hated  
him,  
Even when you both were boys at Theobald's.

ROGER OF YORK. I always hated boundless  
arrogance.

In mine own cause I strove against him there,  
And in thy cause I strive against him now.

HENRY. I cannot think he moves against my  
son,  
Knowing right well with what a tenderness  
He loved my son.

ROGER OF YORK. Before you made him king.

But Becket ever moves against a king.  
The Church is all—the crime to be a king.  
We trust your Royal Grace, lord of more land  
Than any crown in Europe, will not yield  
To lay your neck beneath your citizen's heel.

HENRY. Not to a Gregory of my throning !  
No.

FOLIOT. My royal liege, in aiming at your  
your love,  
It may be sometimes I have overshot  
My duties to our Holy Mother Church,  
Tho' all the world allows I fall no inch  
Behind this Becket, rather go beyond  
In scourgings, macerations, mortifyings,  
Fasts, disciplines that clear the spiritual eye,  
And break the soul from earth. Let all that be.  
I boast not : but you know thro' all this quarrel  
I still have cleaved to the crown, in hope the  
crown

Would cleave to me that but obey'd the crown,  
Crowning your son ; for which our loyal service,  
And since we likewise swore to obey the customs,  
York and myself, and our good Salisbury here,  
Are push'd from out communion of the Church.

JOCELYN OF SALISBURY. Becket hath trodden  
on us like worms, my liege ;  
Trodden one half dead ; one half, but half-alive,  
Cries to the King.

HENRY (*aside*). Take care o' thyself, O King.

JOCELYN OF SALISBURY. Being so crush'd and  
so humiliated



# BECKET

ACT V

We scarcely dare to bless the food we eat  
Because of Becket.

HENRY. What would ye have me do ?

ROGER OF YORK. Summon your barons ; take  
their counsel : yet

I know—could swear—as long as Becket breathes,  
Your Grace will never have one quiet hour.

HENRY. What ? . . . Ay . . . but pray you  
do not work upon me.

I see your drift . . . it may be so . . . and yet  
You know me easily anger'd. Will you hence ?  
He shall absolve you . . . you shall have redress.  
I have a dizzying headache. Let me rest.  
I'll call you by and by.

[*Exeunt* ROGER OF YORK, FOLIOT, and JOCELYN  
OF SALISBURY.]

Would he were dead ! I have lost all love for him.  
If God would take him in some sudden way—  
Would he were dead. [*Lies down.*]

PAGE (*entering*). My liege, the Queen of  
England.

HENRY. God's eyes ! [*Starting up.*]

*Enter* ELEANOR

ELEANOR. Of England ? Say of Aquitaine.  
I am no Queen of England. I had dream'd  
I was the bride of England, and a queen.

HENRY. And,—while you dream'd you were  
the bride of England,—  
Stirring her baby-king against me ? ha !

ELEANOR. The brideless Becket is thy king  
and mine :

I will go live and die in Aquitaine.

HENRY. Except I clap thee into prison here,  
Lest thou shouldst play the wanton there again.  
Ha, you of Aquitaine ! O you of Aquitaine !  
You were but Aquitaine to Louis—no wife ;  
You are only Aquitaine to me—no wife.

ELEANOR. And why, my lord, should I be  
wife to one  
That only wedded me for Aquitaine ?  
Yet this no wife—her six and thirty sail  
Of Provence blew you to your English throne ;  
And this no wife has born you four brave sons,  
And one of them at least is like to prove  
Bigger in our small world than thou art.

HENRY. Ay—  
Richard, if he *be* mine—I hope him mine.  
But thou art like enough to make him thine.

ELEANOR. Becket is like enough to make  
all his.

HENRY. Methought I had recover'd of the  
Becket,  
That all was planed and bevell'd smooth again,  
Save from some hateful cantrip of thine own.

ELEANOR. I will go live and die in Aquitaine.  
I dream'd I was the consort of a king,  
Not one whose back his priest has broken.

HENRY. What !  
Is the end come ? You, will you crown my foe  
My victor in mid-battle ? I will be

# BECKET

ACT V

Sole master of my house. The end is mine.  
What game, what juggle, what devilry are you  
playing ?

Why do you thrust this Becket on me again ?

ELEANOR. Why ? for I *am* true wife, and have  
my fears

Lest Becket thrust you even from your throne.  
Do you know this cross, my liege ?

HENRY (*turning his head*). Away ! Not I.

ELEANOR. Not ev'n the central diamond,  
worth, I think,

Half of the Antioch whence I had it.

HENRY.

That ?

ELEANOR. I gave it you, and you your para-  
mour ;

She sends it back, as being dead to earth,  
So dead henceforth to you.

HENRY. Dead ! you have murder'd her,  
Found out her secret bower and murder'd her.

ELEANOR. Your Becket knew the secret of  
your bower.

HENRY (*calling out*). Ho there ! thy rest of  
life is hopeless prison.

ELEANOR. And what would my own Aqu-  
taine say to that ?

First, free thy captive from *her* hopeless prison.

HENRY. O devil, can I free her from the  
grave ?

ELEANOR. You are too tragic : both of us are  
players

In such a comedy as our court of Provence

Had laugh'd at. That's a delicate Latin lay  
 Of Walter Map : the lady holds the cleric  
 Lovelier than any soldier, his poor tonsure  
 A crown of Empire. Will you have it again ?  
*(Offering the cross. He dashes it down.)*

St. Cupid, that is too irreverent.

Then mine once more. *(Puts it on.)*

Your cleric hath your lady.  
 Nay, what uncomely faces, could he see you !  
 Foam at the mouth because King Thomas, lord  
 Not only of your vassals but amours,  
 Thro' chastest honour of the Decalogue  
 Hath used the full authority of his Church  
 To put her into Godstow nunnery.

HENRY. To put her into Godstow nunnery !  
 He dared not—liar ! yet, yet I remember—  
 I do remember.  
 He bad me put her into a nunnery—  
 Into Godstow, into Hellstow, Devilstow !  
 The Church ! the Church !  
 God's eyes ! I would the Church were down in  
 hell ! *[Exit.]*

ELEANOR. Aha !

*Enter the four* KNIGHTS

FITZURSE. What made the King cry out so  
 furiously ?

ELEANOR. Our Becket, who will not absolve  
 the Bishops.

I think ye four have cause to love this Becket.

## BECKET

ACT V

FITZURSE. I hate him for his insolence to all.

DE TRACY. And I for all his insolence to thee.

DE BRITO. I hate him for I hate him is my reason,

And yet I hate him for a hypocrite.

DE MORVILLE. I do not love him, for he did his best

To break the barons, and now braves the King.

ELEANOR. Strike, then, at once, the King would have him—See!

*Re-enter HENRY*

HENRY. No man to love me, honour me, obey me!

Sluggards and fools!

The slave that eat my bread has kick'd his King!

The dog I cramm'd with dainties worried me!

The fellow that on a lame jade came to court,

A ragged cloak for saddle—he, he, he,

To shake my throne, to push into my chamber—

My bed, where ev'n the slave is private—he—

I'll have her out again, he shall absolve

The bishops—they but did my will—not you—

Sluggards and fools, why do you stand and stare?

You are no King's men—you—you—you are Becket's men.

Down with King Henry! up with the Archbishop!

Will no man free me from this pestilent priest?  
[*Exit.*

[*The KNIGHTS draw their swords.*

ELEANOR. *Are* ye king's men? I am king's  
woman, I.

THE KNIGHTS. King's men! King's men!

## SCENE II

## A ROOM IN CANTERBURY MONASTERY

BECKET *and* JOHN OF SALISBURY

BECKET. York said so?

JOHN OF SALISBURY. Yes: a man may take  
good counsel

Ev'n from his foe.

BECKET. York will say anything.  
What is he saying now? gone to the King  
And taken our anathema with him. York!  
Can the King de-anathematise this York?

JOHN OF SALISBURY. Thomas, I would thou  
hadst return'd to England,  
Like some wise prince of this world from his  
wars,  
With more of olive-branch and amnesty  
For foes at home—thou hast raised the world  
against thee.

BECKET. Why, John, my kingdom is not of  
this world.

# BECKET

ACT V

JOHN OF SALISBURY. If it were more of this  
world it might be  
More of the next. A policy of wise pardon  
Wins here as well as there. To bless thine  
enemies——

BECKET. Ay, mine, not Heaven's.

JOHN OF SALISBURY. And may there not be  
something  
Of this world's leaven in thee too, when crying  
On Holy Church to thunder out her rights  
And thine own wrong so pitilessly? Ah, Thomas,  
The lightnings that we think are only Heaven's  
Flash sometimes out of earth against the heavens.  
The soldier, when he lets his whole self go  
Lost in the common good, the common wrong,  
Strikes truest ev'n for his own self. I crave  
Thy pardon—I have still thy leave to speak.  
Thou hast waged God's war against the King ;  
and yet  
We are self-uncertain creatures, and we may,  
Yea, even when we know not, mix our spites  
And private hates with our defence of Heaven.

*Enter EDWARD GRIM*

BECKET. Thou art but yesterday from Cam-  
bridge, Grim ;  
What say ye there of Becket ?

GRIM. *I believe him*  
The bravest in our roll of Primates down

From Austin—there are some—for there are men  
Of canker'd judgment everywhere——

BECKET. Who hold  
With York, with York against me.

GRIM. Well, my lord,  
A stranger monk desires access to you.

BECKET. York against Canterbury, York  
against God !  
I am open to him. [Exit GRIM.

*Enter ROSAMUND as a Monk*

ROSAMUND. Can I speak with you  
Alone, my father ?

BECKET. Come you to confess ?

ROSAMUND. Not now.

BECKET. Then speak ; this is my other self,  
Who like my conscience never lets me be.

ROSAMUND (*throwing back the cowl*). I know  
him ; our good John of Salisbury.

BECKET. Breaking already from thy noviciate  
To plunge into this bitter world again—  
These wells of Marah. I am grieved, my  
daughter.

I thought that I had made a peace for thee.

ROSAMUND. Small peace was mine in my  
noviciate, father.

Thro' all closed doors a dreadful whisper crept  
That thou wouldst excommunicate the King.  
I could not eat, sleep, pray : I had with me



The monk's disguise thou gavest me for my  
bower :

I think our Abbess knew it and allow'd it.

I fled, and found thy name a charm to get me  
Food, roof, and rest. I met a robber once,  
I told him I was bound to see the Archbishop ;  
' Pass on,' he said, and in thy name I pass'd  
From house to house. In one a son stone-blind  
Sat by his mother's hearth : he had gone too  
far

Into the King's own woods ; and the poor  
mother,

Soon as she learnt I was a friend of thine,

Cried out against the cruelty of the King.

I said it was the King's courts, not the King ;  
But she would not believe me, and she wish'd  
The Church were king : she had seen the Arch-  
bishop once,

So mild, so kind. The people love thee, father.

BECKET. Alas ! when I was Chancellor to  
the King,

I fear I was as cruel as the King.

ROSAMUND. Cruel ? Oh, no—it is the law,  
not he ;

The customs of the realm.

BECKET. The customs ! customs !

ROSAMUND. My lord, you have not excom-  
municated him ?

Oh, if you have, absolve him !

BECKET. Daughter, daughter,  
Deal not with things you know not.

ROSAMUND. I know *him*.  
Then you have done it, and I call *you* cruel.

JOHN OF SALISBURY. No, daughter, you mistake our good Archbishop;  
For once in France the King had been so harsh,

He thought to excommunicate him—Thomas,  
You could not—old affection master'd you,  
You falter'd into tears.

ROSAMUND. God bless him for it.

BECKET. Nay, make me not a woman, John of Salisbury,  
Nor make me traitor to my holy office.  
Did not a man's voice ring along the aisle,  
'The King is sick and almost unto death.'  
How could I excommunicate him then?

ROSAMUND. And wilt thou excommunicate him now?

BECKET. Daughter, my time is short, I shall not do it.  
And were it longer—well—I should not do it.

ROSAMUND. Thanks in this life, and in the life to come.

BECKET. Get thee back to thy nunnery with all haste;  
Let this be thy last trespass. But one question—  
How fares thy pretty boy, the little Geoffrey?  
No fever, cough, croup, sickness?

ROSAMUND. No, but saved  
From all that by our solitude. The plagues  
That smite the city spare the solitudes.

# BECKET

ACT V

BECKET. God save him from all sickness of  
the soul !

Thee too, thy solitude among thy nuns,  
May that save thee ! Doth he remember me ?

ROSAMUND. I warrant him.

BECKET. He is marvellously like thee.

ROSAMUND. Liker the King.

BECKET. No, daughter.

ROSAMUND. Ay, but wait  
Till his nose rises ; he will be very king.

BECKET. Ev'n so : but think not of the  
King : farewell !

ROSAMUND. My lord, the city is full of  
armed men.

BECKET. Ev'n so : farewell !

ROSAMUND. I will but pass to vespers,  
And breathe one prayer for my liege-lord the  
King,

His child and mine own soul, and so return.

BECKET. Pray for me too : much need of  
prayer have I.

[ROSAMUND *kneels and goes.*

Dan John, how much we lose, we celibates,  
Lacking the love of woman and of child.

JOHN OF SALISBURY. More gain than loss ; for  
of your wives you shall

Find one a slut whose fairest linen seems

Foul as her dust-cloth, if she used it—one

So charged with tongue, that every thread of  
thought

Is broken ere it joins—a shrew to boot,

Whose evil song far on into the night  
Thrills to the topmost tile—no hope but death ;  
One slow, fat, white, a burthen of the hearth ;  
And one that being thwarted ever swoons  
And weeps herself into the place of power ;  
And one an *uxor pauperis Ibyci*.

So rare the household honeymaking bee,  
Man's help ! but we, we have the Blessed Virgin  
For worship, and our Mother Church for bride ;  
And all the souls we saved and father'd here  
Will greet us as our babes in Paradise.  
What noise was that ? she told us of arm'd men  
Here in the city. Will you not withdraw ?

BECKET. I once was out with Henry in the  
days

When Henry loved me, and we came upon  
A wild-fowl sitting on her nest, so still  
I reach'd my hand and touch'd ; she did not stir ;  
The snow had frozen round her, and she sat  
Stone-dead upon a heap of ice-cold eggs.  
Look ! how this love, this mother, runs thro' all  
The world God made—even the beast—the bird !

JOHN OF SALISBURY. Ay, still a lover of the  
beast and bird ?

But these arm'd men—will you not hide yourself ?  
Perchance the fierce De Brocs from Saltwood  
Castle,

To assail our Holy Mother lest she brood  
Too long o'er this hard egg, the world, and send  
Her whole heart's heat into it, till it break  
Into young angels. Pray you, hide yourself.

# BECKET

ACT V

BECKET. There was a little fair-hair'd Norman  
maid

Lived in my mother's house : if Rosamund is  
The world's rose, as her name imports her—she  
Was the world's lily.

JOHN OF SALISBURY. Ay, and what of her ?

BECKET. She died of leprosy.

JOHN OF SALISBURY. I know not why  
You call these old things back again, my lord.

BECKET. The drowning man, they say, re-  
members all  
The chances of his life, just ere he dies.

JOHN OF SALISBURY. Ay—but these arm'd  
men—will *you* drown *yourself*?  
He loses half the meed of martyrdom  
Who will be martyr when he might escape.

BECKET. What day of the week ? Tuesday ?

JOHN OF SALISBURY. Tuesday, my lord.

BECKET. On a Tuesday was I born, and on a  
Tuesday  
Baptized ; and on a Tuesday did I fly  
Forth from Northampton ; on a Tuesday pass'd  
From England into bitter banishment ;  
On a Tuesday at Pontigny came to me  
The ghostly warning of my martyrdom ;  
On a Tuesday from mine exile I return'd,  
And on a Tuesday——

[TRACY *enters*, then FITZURSE, DE BRITO, and  
DE MORVILLE. MONKS *following*.

——on a Tuesday—— Tracy !

(*A long silence broken by FITZURSE saying, contemptuously*),

God help thee !

JOHN OF SALISBURY (*aside*). How the good Archbishop reddens !

He never yet could brook the note of scorn.

FITZURSE. My lord, we bring a message from the King

Beyond the water ; will you have it alone,

Or with these listeners near you ?

BECKET. As you will.

FITZURSE. Nay, as *you* will.

BECKET. Nay, as *you* will.

JOHN OF SALISBURY. Why then

Better perhaps to speak with them apart.

Let us withdraw.

[*All go out except the four KNIGHTS and BECKET.*

FITZURSE. We are all alone with him.

Shall I not smite him with his own cross-staff ?

DE MORVILLE. No, look ! the door is open : let him be.

FITZURSE. The King condemns your excommunicating——

BECKET. This is no secret, but a public matter.

In here again !

[JOHN OF SALISBURY and MONKS return.

Now, sirs, the King's commands !

FITZURSE. The King beyond the water, thro' our voices,

Commands you to be dutiful and leal

To your young King on this side of the water,  
Not scorn him for the foibles of his youth.  
What ! you would make his coronation void  
By cursing those who crown'd him. Out upon  
you !

BECKET. Reginald, all men know I loved the  
Prince.

His father gave him to my care, and I  
Became his second father : he had his faults,  
For which I would have laid mine own life down  
To help him from them, since indeed I loved  
him,

And love him next after my lord his father.  
Rather than dim the splendour of his crown  
I fain would treble and quadruple it  
With revenues, realms, and golden provinces  
So that were done in equity.

FITZURSE. You have broken  
Your bond of peace, your treaty with the  
King—

Wakening such brawls and loud disturbances  
In England, that he calls you oversea  
To answer for it in his Norman courts.

BECKET. Prate not of bonds, for never, oh,  
never again

Shall the waste voice of the bond-breaking sea  
Divide me from the mother church of England,  
My Canterbury. Loud disturbances !

Oh, ay—the bells rang out even to deafening,  
Organ and pipe, and dulcimer, chants and hymns  
In all the churches, trumpets in the halls,

Sobs, laughter, cries: they spread their raiment  
down

Before me—would have made my pathway  
flowers,

Save that it was mid-winter in the street,  
But full mid-summer in those honest hearts.

FITZURSE. The King commands you to  
absolve the bishops

Whom you have excommunicated.

BECKET. I ?

Not I, the Pope. Ask *him* for absolution.

FITZURSE. But you advised the Pope.

BECKET. And so I did.

They have but to submit.

THE FOUR KNIGHTS. The King commands  
you.

We are all King's men.

BECKET. King's men at least should know  
That their own King closed with me last July  
That I should pass the censures of the Church  
On those that crown'd young Henry in this  
realm,

And trampled on the rights of Canterbury.

FITZURSE. What ! dare you charge the King  
with treachery ?

*He* sanction thee to excommunicate

The prelates whom he chose to crown his son !

BECKET. I spake no word of treachery,  
Reginald.

But for the truth of this I make appeal

To all the archbishops, bishops, prelates, barons,



Monks, knights, five hundred, that were there  
and heard.

Nay, you yourself were there : you heard yourself.

FITZURSE. I was not there.

BECKET. I saw you there.

FITZURSE. I was not.

BECKET. You were. I never forget anything.

FITZURSE. He makes the King a traitor, me  
a liar.

How long shall we forbear him ?

JOHN OF SALISBURY (*drawing BECKET aside*).

O my good lord,

Speak with them privately on this hereafter.

You see they have been revelling, and I fear

Are braced and brazen'd up with Christmas  
wines

For any murderous brawl.

BECKET. And yet they prate

Of mine, my brawls, when those, that name  
themselves

Of the King's part, have broken down our  
barns,

Wasted our diocese, outraged our tenants,

Lifted our produce, driven our clerics out—

Why they, your friends, those ruffians, the De  
Brocs,

They stood on Dover beach to murder me,

They slew my stags in mine own manor here,

Mutilated, poor brute, my sumpter-mule,

Plunder'd the vessel full of Gascon wine,

The old King's present, carried off the casks,  
Kill'd half the crew, dungeon'd the other half  
In Pevensey Castle——

DE MORVILLE.                   Why not rather then,  
If this be so, complain to your young King,  
Not punish of your own authority?

BECKET. Mine enemies barr'd all access to  
the boy.

They knew he loved me.

Hugh, Hugh, how proudly you exalt your  
head!

Nay, when they seek to overturn our rights,  
I ask no leave of king, or mortal man,  
To set them straight again. Alone I do it.  
Give to the King the things that are the King's,  
And those of God to God.

FITZURSE.       Threats! threats! ye hear him.  
What! will he excommunicate all the world?

[*The KNIGHTS come round BECKET.*]

DE TRACY. He shall not.

DE BRITO. Well, as yet—I should be grate-  
ful——

He hath not excommunicated *me*.

BECKET. Because thou wast *born* excommuni-  
cate.

I never spied in thee one gleam of grace.

DE BRITO. Your Christian's Christian charity!

BECKET.                                   By St. Denis——

DE BRITO. Ay, by St. Denis, now will he  
flame out,

And lose his head as old St. Denis did.

# BECKET

ACT V

BECKET. Ye think to scare me from my  
loyalty  
To God and to the Holy Father. No!  
Tho' all the swords in England flash'd above  
me

Ready to fall at Henry's word or yours—  
Tho' all the loud-lung'd trumpets upon earth  
Blared from the heights of all the thrones of her  
kings,

Blowing the world against me, I would stand  
Clothed with the full authority of Rome,  
Mail'd in the perfect panoply of faith,  
First of the foremost of their files, who die  
For God, to people heaven in the great day  
When God makes up his jewels. Once I fled—  
Never again, and you—I marvel at you—  
Ye know what is between us. Ye have sworn  
Yourselves my men when I was Chancellor—  
My vassals—and yet threaten your Archbishop  
In his own house.

KNIGHTS. Nothing can be between us  
That goes against our fealty to the King.

FITZURSE. And in his name we charge you  
that ye keep  
This traitor from escaping.

BECKET. Rest you easy,  
For I am easy to keep. I shall not fly.  
Here, here, here will you find me.

DE MORVILLE. Know you not  
You have spoken to the peril of your life?

BECKET. As I shall speak again.

FITZURSE, DE TRACY, *and* DE BRITO. To arms!

[*They rush out, DE MORVILLE lingers.*

BECKET. De Morville,

I had thought so well of you ; and even now

You seem the least assassin of the four.

Oh, do not damn yourself for company !

Is it too late for me to save your soul ?

I pray you for one moment stay and speak.

DE MORVILLE. Becket, it *is* too late. [*Exit.*

BECKET. Is it too late ?

Too late on earth may be too soon in hell.

KNIGHTS (*in the distance*). Close the great gate—ho, there—upon the town.

BECKET'S RETAINERS. Shut the hall-doors.

[*A pause.*

BECKET. You hear them, brother John ;  
Why do you stand so silent, brother John ?

JOHN OF SALISBURY. For I was musing on an  
ancient saw,

*Suaviter in modo, fortiter in re,*

Is strength less strong when hand-in-hand with  
grace ?

*Gratior in pulchro corpore virtus.* Thomas,  
Why should you heat yourself for such as these ?

BECKET. Methought I answer'd moderately  
enough.

JOHN OF SALISBURY. As one that blows the  
coal to cool the fire.

My lord, I marvel why you never lean  
On any man's advising but your own.

# BECKET

ACT V

BECKET. Is it so, Dan John? well, what should I have done?

JOHN OF SALISBURY. You should have taken counsel with your friends

Before these bandits brake into your presence.

They seek—you make—occasion for your death.

BECKET. My counsel is already taken, John. I am prepared to die.

JOHN OF SALISBURY. We are sinners all,  
The best of all not all-prepared to die.

BECKET. God's will be done!

JOHN OF SALISBURY. Ay, well. God's will be done!

GRIM (*re-entering*). My lord, the knights are arming in the garden  
Beneath the sycamore.

BECKET. Good! let them arm.

GRIM. And one of the De Brocs is with them, Robert,  
The apostate monk that was with Randulf here.

He knows the twists and turnings of the place.

BECKET. No fear!

GRIM. No fear, my lord.

[*Crashes on the hall-doors. The MONKS flee.*]

BECKET (*rising*). Our dovecote flown!  
I cannot tell why monks should all be cowards.

JOHN OF SALISBURY. Take refuge in your own cathedral, Thomas.

BECKET. Do they not fight the Great Fiend day by day?

Valour and holy life should go together.

Why should all monks be cowards?

JOHN OF SALISBURY. Are they so?  
I say, take refuge in your own cathedral.

BECKET. Ay, but I told them I would wait  
them here.

GRIM. May they not say you dared not show  
yourself  
In your old place? and vespers are beginning.

[*Bell rings for vespers till end of scene.*]

You should attend the office, give them heart.

They fear you slain: they dread they know not  
what.

BECKET. Ay, monks, not men.

GRIM. I am a monk, my lord.  
Perhaps, my lord, you wrong us.  
Some would stand by you to the death.

BECKET. Your pardon.

JOHN OF SALISBURY. He said, 'Attend the  
office.'

BECKET. Attend the office?  
Why then—The Cross!—who bears my Cross  
before me?

Methought they would have brain'd me with it,  
John.

[*GRIM takes it.*]

GRIM. I! Would that I could bear thy  
cross indeed!

BECKET. The Mitre!

JOHN OF SALISBURY. Will you wear it?—  
there!—

[*BECKET puts on the mitre.*]

# BECKET

ACT V

BECKET.

The Pall !

I go to meet my King !

[*Puts on the pall.*

GRIM.

To meet the King ?

[*Crashes on the doors as they go out.*

JOHN OF SALISBURY. Why do you move with  
such a stateliness ?

Can you not hear them yonder like a storm,  
Battering the doors, and breaking thro' the walls ?

BECKET. Why do the heathen rage ? My  
two good friends,  
What matters murder'd here, or murder'd there ?  
And yet my dream foretold my martyrdom  
In mine own church. It is God's will. Go on.  
Nay, drag me not. We must not seem to fly.

## SCENE III

NORTH TRANSEPT OF CANTERBURY CATHEDRAL

*On the right hand a flight of steps leading to the Choir,  
another flight on the left, leading to the North Aisle.  
Winter afternoon slowly darkening. Low thunder  
now and then of an approaching storm. MONKS  
heard chanting the service. ROSAMUND kneeling.*

ROSAMUND. O blessed saint, O glorious  
Benedict,—

These arm'd men in the city, these fierce faces—  
Thy holy follower founded Canterbury—

Save that dear head which now is Canterbury,  
Save him, he saved my life, he saved my child,  
Save him, his blood would darken Henry's name;  
Save him till all as saintly as thyself  
He miss the searching flame of purgatory,  
And pass at once perfect to Paradise.

*[Noise of steps and voices in the cloisters.]*

Hark! Is it they? Coming! He is not  
here—

Not yet, thank heaven. O save him!

*[Goes up steps leading to choir.]*

BECKET (*entering, forced along by JOHN OF SALIS-  
BURY and GRIM*). No, I tell you!

I cannot bear a hand upon my person,  
Why do you force me thus against my will?

GRIM. My lord, we force you from your  
enemies.

BECKET. As you would force a king from  
being crown'd.

JOHN OF SALISBURY. We must not force the  
crown of martyrdom.

*[Service stops. MONKS come down from the  
stairs that lead to the choir.]*

MONKS. Here is the great Archbishop! He  
lives! he lives!

Die with him, and be glorified together.

BECKET. Together? . . . get you back! go  
on with the office.

MONKS. Come, then, with us to vespers.

BECKET. How can I come

When you so block the entry? Back, I say!



# BECKET

ACT V

Go on with the office. Shall not Heaven be served  
Tho' earth's last earthquake clash'd the minster-  
bells,

And the great deeps were broken up again,  
And hiss'd against the sun ?

*[Noise in the cloisters.]*

MONKS. The murderers, hark !  
Let us hide ! let us hide !

BECKET. What do these people fear ?

MONKS. Those arm'd men in the cloister.

BECKET. Be not such cravens !  
I will go out and meet them.

GRIM AND OTHERS. Shut the doors !  
We will not have him slain before our face.

*[They close the doors of the transept. Knocking.]*

Fly, fly, my lord, before they burst the doors !  
*[Knocking.]*

BECKET. Why, these are our own monks  
who follow'd us !  
And will you bolt them out, and have *them* slain ?  
Undo the doors : the church is not a castle :  
Knock, and it shall be open'd. Are you deaf ?  
What, have I lost authority among you ?  
Stand by, make way !

*[Opens the doors. Enter MONKS from cloister.]*

Come in, my friends, come in !  
Nay, faster, faster !

MONKS. Oh, my lord Archbishop,  
A score of knights all arm'd with swords and  
axes—

To the choir, to the choir !

[*MONKS divide, part flying by the stairs on the right, part by those on the left. The rush of these last bears BECKET along with them some way up the steps, where he is left standing alone.*]

BECKET. Shall I too pass to the choir,  
And die upon the Patriarchal throne  
Of all my predecessors ?

JOHN OF SALISBURY. No, to the crypt !  
Twenty steps down. Stumble not in the dark-  
ness,  
Lest they should seize thee.

GRIM. To the crypt ? no—no,  
To the chapel of St. Blaise beneath the roof !

JOHN OF SALISBURY (*pointing upward and down-ward*). That way, or this ! Save thyself  
either way.

BECKET. Oh, no, not either way, nor any  
way  
Save by that way which leads thro' night to  
light.

Not twenty steps, but one.  
And fear not I should stumble in the darkness,  
Not tho' it be their hour, the power of darkness,  
But my hour too, the power of light in darkness !  
I am not in the darkness but the light,  
Seen by the Church in Heaven, the Church on  
earth—

The power of life in death to make her free !

[*Enter the four KNIGHTS. JOHN OF SALISBURY  
flies to the altar of St. Benedict.*]

# BECKET

ACT V

FITZURSE. Here, here, King's men !

*[Catches hold of the last flying MONK.]*

Where is the traitor Becket ?

MONK. I am not he ! I am not he, my lord.  
I am not he indeed !

FITZURSE. Hence to the fiend !

*[Pushes him away.]*

Where is this treble traitor to the King ?

DE TRACY. Where is the Archbishop,  
Thomas Becket ?

BECKET. Here.

No traitor to the King, but Priest of God,  
Primate of England. *[Descending into the transept.]*

I am he ye seek.

What would ye have of me ?

FITZURSE. Your life.

DE TRACY. Your life.

DE MORVILLE. Save that you will absolve  
the bishops.

BECKET. Never,—

Except they make submission to the Church.

You had my answer to that cry before.

DE MORVILLE. Why, then you are a dead  
man ; flee !

BECKET. I will not.

I am readier to be slain, than thou to slay.

Hugh, I know well thou hast but half a heart

To bathe this sacred pavement with my blood.

God pardon thee and these, but God's full curse

Shatter you all to pieces if ye harm

One of my flock !

FITZURSE. Was not the great gate shut ?  
They are thronging in to vespers—half the town.  
We shall be overwhelm'd. Seize him and carry  
him !

Come with us—nay—thou art our prisoner—  
come !

DE MORVILLE. Ay, make him prisoner, do  
not harm the man.

[FITZURSE *lays hold of the ARCHBISHOP's pall.*

BECKET. Touch me not !

DE BRITO. How the good priest gods himself !  
He is not yet ascended to the Father.

FITZURSE. I will not only touch, but drag  
thee hence.

BECKET. Thou art my man, thou art my  
vassal. Away !

[*Flings him off till he reels, almost to falling.*

DE TRACY (*lays hold of the pall*). Come ; as  
he said, thou art our prisoner.

BECKET. Down !

[*Throws him headlong.*

FITZURSE (*advances with drawn sword*). I told  
thee that I should remember thee !

BECKET. Profligate pander !

FITZURSE. Do you hear that ? strike, strike.

[*Strikes off the ARCHBISHOP's mitre, and wounds  
him in the forehead.*

BECKET (*covers his eyes with his hand*). I do  
commend my cause to God, the Virgin,  
St. Denis of France and St. Alphege of England,

# BECKET

ACT V

And all the tutelar Saints of Canterbury.

[GRIM *wraps his arms about the* ARCHBISHOP.  
Spare this defence, dear brother.

[TRACY *has arisen, and approaches, hesitatingly, with his sword raised.*

FITZURSE. Strike him, Tracy !

ROSAMUND (*rushing down steps from the choir*).

No, No, No, No !

FITZURSE. This wanton here. De Morville,  
Hold her away.

DE MORVILLE. I hold her.

ROSAMUND (*held back by* DE MORVILLE, *and stretching out her arms*). Mercy, mercy,  
As you would hope for mercy.

FITZURSE. Strike, I say.

GRIM. O God, O noble knights, O sacrilege !  
Strike our Archbishop in his own cathedral !  
The Pope, the King, will curse you—the whole  
world

Abhor you ; ye will die the death of dogs !

Nay, nay, good Tracy. [Lifts his arm.

FITZURSE. Answer not, but strike.

DE TRACY. There is my answer then.

[Sword falls on GRIM's arm, and glances from it,  
wounding BECKET.

GRIM. Mine arm is sever'd.  
I can no more—fight out the good fight—die  
Conqueror.

[Staggers into the chapel of St. Benedict.

BECKET (*falling on his knees*). At the right  
hand of Power—

Power and great glory—for thy Church, O  
Lord—

Into Thy hands, O Lord—into Thy hands !——  
[*Sinks prone.*]

DE BRITO. This last to rid thee of a world of  
brawls ! (*Kills him.*)

The traitor's dead, and will arise no more.

FITZURSE. Nay, have we still'd him ? What !  
the great Archbishop !

Does he breathe ? No ?

DE TRACY. No, Reginald, he is dead.  
[*Storm bursts.*<sup>1</sup>]

DE MORVILLE. Will the earth gape and  
swallow us ?

DE BRITO. The deed's done—  
Away !

[DE BRITO, DE TRACY, FITZURSE, *rush out*,  
*crying 'King's men!'* DE MORVILLE *follows*  
*slowly. Flashes of lightning thro' the Cathe-*  
*dral. ROSAMUND seen kneeling by the body of*  
BECKET.]

<sup>1</sup> A tremendous thunderstorm actually broke over the Cathedral  
as the murderers were leaving it.



THE CUP  
A TRAGEDY





DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

GALATIANS

SYNORIX, *an ex-Tetrarch.*

SINNATUS, *a Tetrarch.*

*Attendant.*

*Boy.*

*Maid.*

PHŒBE.

CAMMA, *wife of Sinnatus, afterwards Priestess in the Temple of Artemis.*

ROMANS

ANTONIUS, *a Roman General.*

PUBLIUS.

*Nobleman.*

*Messenger.*



# THE CUP

## ACT I

### SCENE I.—DISTANT VIEW OF A CITY OF GALATIA

*As the curtain rises, PRIESTESSES are heard singing in the Temple. Boy discovered on a pathway among Rocks, picking grapes. A party of ROMAN SOLDIERS, guarding a prisoner in chains, come down the pathway and exeunt.*

*Enter SYNORIX (looking round). Singing ceases.*

SYNORIX. Pine, beech and plane, oak, walnut,  
apricot,

Vine, cypress, poplar, myrtle, bowering-in  
The city where she dwells. She past me here  
Three years ago when I was flying from  
My Tetrarchy to Rome. I almost touch'd her—  
A maiden slowly moving on to music  
Among her maidens to this Temple—O Gods !  
She is my fate—else wherefore has my fate  
Brought me again to her own city ?—married  
Since—married Sinnatus, the Tetrarch here—  
But if he be conspirator, Rome will chain,

# THE CUP

ACT I

Or slay him. I may trust to gain her then  
 When I shall have my tetrarchy restored  
 By Rome, our mistress, grateful that I show'd her  
 The weakness and the dissonance of our clans,  
 And how to crush them easily. Wretched race!  
 And once I wish'd to scourge them to the bones.  
 But in this narrow breathing-time of life  
 Is vengeance for its own sake worth the while,  
 If once our ends are gain'd? and now this cup—  
 I never felt such passion for a woman.

*[Brings out a cup and scroll from under his cloak.]*

What have I written to her?

*[Reading the scroll.]*

‘To the admired Camma, wife of Sinnatus,  
 the Tetrarch, one who years ago, himself an  
 adorer of our great goddess, Artemis, beheld  
 you afar off worshipping in her Temple, and  
 loved you for it, sends you this cup rescued from  
 the burning of one of her shrines in a city thro’  
 which he past with the Roman army: it is the  
 cup we use in our marriages. Receive it from  
 one who cannot at present write himself other  
 than

‘A GALATIAN SERVING BY FORCE IN THE  
 ROMAN LEGION.’

*[Turns and looks up to Boy.]*

Boy, dost thou know the house of Sinnatus?

Boy. These grapes are for the house of  
 Sinnatus—

Close to the Temple.

## THE CUP

SYNORIX. Yonder ?

Boy. Yes.

SYNORIX (*aside*). That I  
With all my range of women should yet shun  
To meet her face to face at once ! My boy,  
[*Boy comes down rocks to him.*

Take thou this letter and this cup to Camma,  
The wife of Sinnatus.

Boy. Going or gone to-day  
To hunt with Sinnatus.

SYNORIX. That matters not.  
Take thou this cup and leave it at her doors.  
[*Gives the cup and scroll to the Boy.*

Boy. I will, my lord.  
[*Takes his basket of grapes and exit.*

*Enter ANTONIUS*

ANTONIUS (*meeting the Boy as he goes out*).

Why, whither runs the boy ?  
Is that the cup you rescued from the fire ?

SYNORIX. I send it to the wife of Sinnatus,  
One half besotted in religious rites.  
You come here with your soldiers to enforce  
The long-withholden tribute : you suspect  
This Sinnatus of playing patriotism,  
Which in your sense is treason. You have yet  
No proof against him : now this pious cup  
Is passport to their house, and open arms  
To him who gave it ; and once there I warrant  
I worm thro' all their windings.

# THE CUP

ACT I

ANTONIUS. If you prosper,  
Our Senate, wearied of their tetrarchies,  
Their quarrels with themselves, their spites at  
Rome,

Is like enough to cancel them, and throne  
One king above them all, who shall be true  
To the Roman : and from what I heard in  
Rome,

This tributary crown may fall to you.

SYNORIX. The king, the crown ! their talk in  
Rome ? is it so ? [ANTONIUS *nods*.

Well—I shall serve Galatia taking it,  
And save her from herself, and be to Rome  
More faithful than a Roman.

[*Turns and sees CAMMA coming.*

Stand aside,

Stand aside ; here she comes !

[*Watching CAMMA as she enters with her MAID.*

CAMMA (*to MAID*). Where is he, girl ?

MAID. You know the waterfall  
That in the summer keeps the mountain side,  
But after rain o'erleaps a jutting rock  
And shoots three hundred feet.

CAMMA. The stag is there ?

MAID. Seen in the thicket at the bottom  
there

But yester-even.

CAMMA. Good then, we will climb  
The mountain opposite and watch the chase.

[*They descend the rocks and exeunt.*

SYNORIX (*watching her*). (*Aside.*) The bust  
of Juno and the brows and eyes  
Of Venus ; face and form unmatchable !

ANTONIUS. Why do you look at her so  
lingeringly ?

SYNORIX. To see if years have changed her.

ANTONIUS (*sarcastically*). Love her, do you ?

SYNORIX. I envied Sinnatus when he married  
her.

ANTONIUS. She knows it ? Ha !

SYNORIX. She—no, nor ev'n my face.

ANTONIUS. Nor Sinnatus either ?

SYNORIX. No, nor Sinnatus.

ANTONIUS. Hot-blooded ! I have heard  
them say in Rome,  
That your own people cast you from their  
bounds,

For some unprincely violence to a woman,  
As Rome did Tarquin.

SYNORIX. Well, if this were so  
I here return like Tarquin—for a crown.

ANTONIUS. And may be foil'd like Tarquin,  
if you follow  
Not the dry light of Rome's straight-going  
policy,

But the fool-fire of love or lust, which well  
May make you lose yourself, may even drown you  
In the good regard of Rome.

SYNORIX. Tut—fear me not ;  
I ever had my victories among women.  
I am most true to Rome.



# THE CUP

ACT I

ANTONIUS (*aside*). I hate the man !  
What filthy tools our Senate works with ! Still  
I must obey them. (*Aloud.*) Fare you well.

[*Going.*

SYNORIX. Farewell !

ANTONIUS (*stopping*). A moment ! If you  
track this Sinnatus  
In any treason, I give you here an order

[*Produces a paper.*

To seize upon him. Let me sign it. (*Signs it.*)

There

‘Antonius leader of the Roman Legion.’

[*Hands the paper to SYNORIX. Goes up pathway and exit.*

SYNORIX. Woman again !—but I am wiser  
now.

No rushing on the game—the net,—the net.

[*Shouts of ‘SINNATUS ! SINNATUS !’ Then horn.*

[*Looking off stage.*] He comes, a rough, bluff,  
simple-looking fellow.

If we may judge the kernel by the husk,  
Not one to keep a woman’s fealty when  
Assailed by Craft and Love. I’ll join with him :  
I may reap something from him—come upon  
*her*

Again, perhaps, to-day—*her*. Who are with  
him ?

I see no face that knows me. Shall I risk it ?  
I am a Roman now, they dare not touch me.  
I will.

*Enter SINNATUS, HUNTSMEN and hounds*

Fair Sir, a happy day to you !  
You reckon but little of the Roman here,  
While you can take your pastime in the woods.

SINNATUS. Ay, ay, why not ? What would  
you with me, man ?

SYNORIX. I am a life-long lover of the chase,  
And tho' a stranger fain would be allow'd  
To join the hunt.

SINNATUS. Your name ?

SYNORIX. Strato, my name.

SINNATUS. No Roman name ?

SYNORIX. A Greek, my lord ; you know  
That we Galatians are both Greek and Gaul.

*[Shouts and horns in the distance.]*

SINNATUS. Hillo, the stag ! *(To SYNORIX.)*

What, you are all unfurnish'd ?  
Give him a bow and arrows—follow—follow.

*[Exit, followed by HUNTSMEN.]*

SYNORIX. Slowly but surely—till I see my  
way.

It is the one step in the dark beyond  
Our expectation, that amazes us.

*[Distant shouts and horns.]*

Hillo ! Hillo !

*[Exit SYNORIX. Shouts and horns.]*

# THE CUP

ACT I

## SCENE II

### A ROOM IN THE TETRARCH'S HOUSE

*Frescoed figures on the walls. Evening. Moonlight outside. A couch with cushions on it. A small table with a flagon of wine, cups, plate of grapes, etc., also the cup of Scene I. A chair with drapery on it.*

CAMMA *enters, and opens curtains of window.*

CAMMA. No Sinnatus yet—and there the rising moon.

*[Takes up a cithern and sits on couch. Plays and sings.]*

Moon on the field and the foam,  
Moon on the waste and the wold,  
Moon bring him home, bring him home  
Safe from the dark and the cold,  
Home, sweet moon, bring him home,  
Home with the flock to the fold—  
Safe from the wolf——

*(Listening.)* Is he coming? I thought I heard  
A footstep. No not yet. They say that Rome  
Sprang from a wolf. I fear my dear lord mixt  
With some conspiracy against the wolf.

This mountain shepherd never dream'd of Rome.

*(Sings.)* Safe from the wolf to the fold——

And that great break of precipice that runs  
Thro' all the wood, where twenty years ago

Huntsman, and hound, and deer were all neck-  
broken !

Nay, here he comes.

*Enter SINNATUS followed by SYNORIX*

SINNATUS (*angrily*). I tell thee, my good fellow,  
*My* arrow struck the stag.

SYNORIX. But was it so ?  
Nay, you were further off : besides the wind  
Went with *my* arrow.

SINNATUS. I am sure *I* struck him.

SYNORIX. And I am just as sure, my lord, *I*  
struck him.

(*Aside.*) And I may strike your game when you  
are gone.

CAMMA. Come, come, we will not quarrel  
about the stag.

I have had a weary day in watching you.  
Yours must have been a wearier. Sit and eat,  
And take a hunter's vengeance on the meats.

SINNATUS. No, no—we have eaten—we are  
heated. Wine !

CAMMA. Who is our guest ?

SINNATUS. Strato he calls himself.

[CAMMA *offers wine to SYNORIX, while SINNATUS*  
*helps himself.*

SINNATUS. I pledge you, Strato. [*Drinks.*

SYNORIX. And I you, my lord. [*Drinks.*

SINNATUS (*seeing the cup sent to CAMMA*).  
What's here ?

## THE CUP

ACT I

CAMMA. A strange gift sent to me to-day.  
A sacred cup saved from a blazing shrine  
Of our great Goddess, in some city where  
Antonius past. I had believed that Rome  
Made war upon the peoples not the Gods.

SYNORIX. Most like the city rose against  
Antonius,  
Whereon he fired it, and the sacred shrine  
By chance was burnt along with it.

SINNATUS. Had you then  
No message with the cup?

CAMMA. Why, yes, see here.  
[Gives him the scroll.

SINNATUS (*reads*).

‘To the admired Camma,—beheld you  
afar off—loved you—sends you this cup—the  
cup we use in our marriages—cannot at present  
write himself other than

‘A GALATIAN SERVING BY FORCE IN THE  
ROMAN LEGION.’

Serving by force! Were there no boughs to  
hang on,  
Rivers to drown in? Serve by force? No  
force  
Could make me serve by force.

SYNORIX. How then, my lord?  
The Roman is encamp't without your city—  
The force of Rome a thousand-fold our own.  
Must all Galatia hang or drown herself?  
And you a Prince and Tetrarch in this province—

SINNATUS. Province !

SYNORIX. Well, well, they call it so in Rome.

SINNATUS (*angrily*). Province !

SYNORIX. A noble anger ! but Antonius  
To-morrow will demand your tribute—you,  
Can you make war ? Have you alliances ?  
Bithynia, Pontus, Paphlagonia ?  
We have had our leagues of old with Eastern  
kings.

There is my hand—if such a league there be.  
What will you do ?

SINNATUS. Not set myself abroad  
And run my mind out to a random guest  
Who join'd me in the hunt. You saw my  
hounds

True to the scent ; and we have two-legg'd dogs  
Among us who can smell a true occasion,  
And when to bark and how.

SYNORIX. My good Lord Sinnatus,  
I once was at the hunting of a lion.  
Roused by the clamour of the chase he woke,  
Came to the front of the wood—his monarch  
mane

Bristled about his quick ears—he stood there  
Staring upon the hunter. A score of dogs  
Gnaw'd at his ankles : at the last he felt  
The trouble of his feet, put forth one paw,  
Slew four, and knew it not, and so remain'd  
Staring upon the hunter : and this Rome  
Will crush you if you wrestle with her ; then  
Save for some slight report in her own Senate

# THE CUP

ACT I

Scarce know what she has done.

(*Aside.*) Would I could move him,  
Provoke him any way! (*Aloud.*) The Lady  
Camma,

Wise I am sure as she is beautiful,  
Will close with me that to submit at once  
Is better than a wholly-hopeless war,  
Our gallant citizens murder'd all in vain,  
Son, husband, brother gash'd to death in vain,  
And the small state more cruelly trampled on  
Than had she never moved.

CAMMA. Sir, I had once  
A boy who died a babe ; but were he living  
And grown to man and Sinnatus will'd it, I  
Would set him in the front rank of the fight  
With scarce a pang. (*Rises.*) Sir, if a state  
submit

At once, she may be blotted out at once  
And swallow'd in the conqueror's chronicle.  
Whereas in wars of freedom and defence  
The glory and grief of battle won or lost  
Solders a race together—yea—tho' they fail,  
The names of those who fought and fell are like  
A bank'd-up fire that flashes out again  
From century to century, and at last  
May lead them on to victory—I hope so—  
Like phantoms of the Gods.

SINNATUS. Well spoken, wife.

SYNORIX (*bowing*). Madam, so well I yield.

SINNATUS. I should not wonder  
If Synorix, who has dwelt three years in Rome

And wrought his worst against his native land,  
Returns with this Antonius.

SYNORIX. What is Synorix?

SINNATUS. Galatian, and not know? This  
Synorix

Was Tetrarch here, and tyrant also—did  
Dishonour to our wives.

SYNORIX. Perhaps you judge him  
With feeble charity: being as you tell me  
Tetrarch, there might be willing wives enough  
To feel dishonour, honour.

CAMMA. Do not say so.  
I know of no such wives in all Galatia.  
There may be courtesans for aught I know  
Whose life is one dishonour.

*Enter ATTENDANT*

ATTENDANT (*aside*). My lord, the men!

SINNATUS (*aside*). Our anti-Roman faction?

ATTENDANT (*aside*). Ay, my lord.

SYNORIX (*overhearing*). (*Aside.*) I have  
enough—their anti-Roman faction.

SINNATUS (*aloud*). Some friends of mine  
would speak with me without.

You, Strato, make good cheer till I return.

[*Exit.*]

SYNORIX. I have much to say, no time to say  
it in.

First, lady, know myself am that Galatian  
Who sent the cup.



# THE CUP

ACT I

CAMMA. I thank you from my heart.

SYNORIX. Then that I serve with Rome to  
serve Galatia.

That is my secret : keep it, or you sell me  
To torment and to death. *[Coming closer.]*

For your ear only—  
I love you—for your love to the great Goddess.  
The Romans sent me here a spy upon you,  
To draw you and your husband to your doom.  
I'd sooner die than do it.

*[Takes out paper given him by ANTONIUS.]*

This paper sign'd  
Antonius—will you take it, read it? there!

CAMMA. *(Reads.)* 'You are to seize on  
Sinnatus,—if——'

SYNORIX. *(Snatches paper.)* No more.  
What follows is for no wife's eyes. O Camma,  
Rome has a glimpse of this conspiracy;  
Rome never yet hath spar'd conspirator.  
Horrible! flaying, scourging, crucifying——

CAMMA. I am tender enough. Why do you  
practise on me?

SYNORIX. Why should I practise on you?  
How you wrong me!

I am sure of being every way malign'd.  
And if you should betray me to your husband——

CAMMA. Will *you* betray him by this order?

SYNORIX. See,

I tear it all to pieces, never dream'd  
Of acting on it. *[Tears the paper.]*

CAMMA. I owe you thanks for ever.

SYNORIX. Hath Sinnatus never told you of  
this plot?

CAMMA. What plot?

SYNORIX. A child's sand-castle on the beach  
For the next wave—all seen,—all calculated,  
All known by Rome. No chance for Sinnatus.

CAMMA. Why said you not as much to my  
brave Sinnatus?

SYNORIX. Brave—ay—too brave, too over-  
confident,

Too like to ruin himself, and you, and me!  
Who else, with this black thunderbolt of Rome  
Above him, would have chased the stag to-  
day

In the full face of all the Roman camp?  
A miracle that they let him home again,  
Not caught, maim'd, blinded him.

[CAMMA *shudders*.

(*Aside*.) I have made her tremble.

(*Aloud*.) I know they mean to torture him to  
death.

I dare not tell him how I came to know it;  
I durst not trust him with—my serving Rome  
To serve Galatia: you heard him on the letter.  
Not say as much? I all but said as much.  
I am sure I told him that his plot was folly.  
I say it to you—you are wiser—Rome knows  
all,

But you know not the savagery of Rome.

CAMMA. O—have you power with Rome?  
use it for him!

# THE CUP

ACT I

SYNORIX. Alas ! I have no such power with  
Rome. All that  
Lies with Antonius.

*[As if struck by a sudden thought. Comes over  
to her.]*

He will pass to-morrow  
In the gray dawn before the Temple doors.  
You have beauty,—O great beauty,—and  
Antonius,

So gracious toward women, never yet  
Flung back a woman's prayer. Plead to him,  
I am sure you will prevail.

CAMMA. Still—I should tell  
My husband.

SYNORIX. Will he let you plead for him  
To a Roman ?

CAMMA. I fear not.

SYNORIX. Then do not tell him.  
Or tell him, if you will, when you return,  
When you have charm'd our general into mercy,  
And all is safe again. O dearest lady,

*[Murmurs of 'SYNORIX ! SYNORIX !' heard outside.]*  
Think,—torture,—death,—and come.

CAMMA. I will, I will.  
And I will not betray you.

SYNORIX (*aside*). (*As SINNATUS enters.*) Stand  
apart.

*Enter SINNATUS and ATTENDANT*

SINNATUS. Thou art that Synorix ! One  
whom thou hast wrong'd

Without there, knew thee with Antonius.  
They howl for thee, to rend thee head from limb.

SYNORIX. I am much malign'd. I thought  
to serve Galatia.

SINNATUS. Serve thyself first, villain ! They  
shall not harm

My guest within my house. There ! (*points to  
door*) there ! this door

Opens upon the forest ! Out, begone !

Henceforth I am thy mortal enemy.

SYNORIX. However I thank thee (*draws his  
sword*) ; thou hast saved my life.

[*Exit.*  
SINNATUS. (*To Attendant.*) Return and tell  
them Synorix is not here.

[*Exit Attendant.*

What did that villain Synorix say to you ?

CAMMA. Is *he—that*—Synorix ?

SINNATUS. Wherefore should you doubt it ?  
One of the men there knew him.

CAMMA. Only one,  
And he perhaps mistaken in the face.

SINNATUS. Come, come, could he deny it ?  
What did he say ?

CAMMA. What *should* he say ?

SINNATUS. What *should* he say, my wife !  
He should say this, that being Tetrarch once  
His own true people cast him from their doors  
Like a base coin.

CAMMA. Not kindly to them ?

SINNATUS. Kindly ?

# THE CUP

ACT I

O the most kindly Prince in the world !  
 Would clap his honest citizens on the back,  
 Bandy their own rude jests with them, be curious  
 About the welfare of their babes, their wives,  
 O ay—their wives—their wives. What should  
     he say ?

He should say nothing to my wife if I  
 Were by to throttle him ! He steep'd himself  
 In all the lust of Rome. How should *you* guess  
 What manner of beast it is ?

CAMMA.                                Yet he seem'd kindly,  
 And said he loathed the cruelties that Rome  
 Wrought on her vassals.

SINNATUS.                                Did he, *honest* man ?

CAMMA. And you, that seldom brook the  
     stranger here,  
 Have let him hunt the stag with you to-day.

SINNATUS. I warrant you now, he said *he*  
     struck the stag.

CAMMA. Why no, he never touch'd upon  
     the stag.

SINNATUS. Why so I said, *my* arrow. Well,  
     to sleep.                                [*Goes to close door.*]

CAMMA. Nay, close not yet the door upon a  
     night  
 That looks half day.

SINNATUS. True ; and my friends may spy  
     him  
 And slay him as he runs.

CAMMA.                                He is gone already.  
 Oh look,—yon grove upon the mountain,—white

In the sweet moon as with a lovelier snow !  
But what a blotch of blackness underneath !  
Sinnatus, you remember—yea, you must,  
That there three years ago—the vast vine-bowers  
Ran to the summit of the trees, and dropt  
Their streamers earthward, which a breeze of

May

Took ever and anon, and open'd out  
The purple zone of hill and heaven ; there  
You told your love ; and like the swaying vines—  
Yea,—with our eyes,—our hearts, our prophet  
hopes

Let in the happy distance, and that all  
But cloudless heaven which we have found  
together

In our three married years ! You kiss'd me  
there

For the first time. Sinnatus, kiss me now.

SINNATUS. First kiss. (*Kisses her.*) There  
then. You talk almost as if it

Might be the last.

CAMMA. Will you not eat a little ?

SINNATUS. No, no, we found a goat-herd's hut  
and shared

His fruits and milk. Liar ! You will believe  
Now that he never stuck the stag—a brave one  
Which you shall see to-morrow.

CAMMA. I rise to-morrow

In the gray dawn, and take this holy cup  
To lodge it in the shrine of Artemis.

SINNATUS. Good !

# THE CUP

ACT I

CAMMA. If I be not back in half an hour,  
Come after me.

SINNATUS. What ! is there danger ?

CAMMA. Nay,  
None that I know : 'tis but a step from here  
To the Temple.

SINNATUS. All my brain is full of sleep.  
Wake me before you go, I'll after you—

After *me* now ! [Closes door and exit.

CAMMA (*drawing curtains*). Your shadow.  
Synorix—

His face was not malignant, and he said  
That men malign'd him. Shall I go ? Shall I go ?  
Death, torture—

'He never yet flung back a woman's prayer'—  
I go, but I will have my dagger with me.

[Exit.

## SCENE III

SAME AS SCENE I. DAWN.

*Music and Singing in the Temple*

*Enter SYNORIX watchfully, after him PUBLIUS and*  
SOLDIERS

SYNORIX. Publius !

PUBLIUS. Here !

SYNORIX. Do you remember what  
I told you ?

PUBLIUS. When you cry 'Rome, Rome,' to  
seize

On whomsoever may be talking with you,  
Or man, or woman, as traitors unto Rome.

SYNORIX. Right. Back again. How many  
of you are there?

PUBLIUS. Some half a score.

[*Exeunt SOLDIERS and PUBLIUS.*]

SYNORIX. I have my guard about me.

I need not fear the crowd that hunted me  
Across the woods, last night. I hardly gain'd  
The camp at midnight. Will she come to me  
Now that she knows me Synorix? Not if  
Sinnatus

Has told her all the truth about me. Well,  
I cannot help the mould that I was cast in.  
I fling all that upon my fate, my star.  
I know that I am genial, I would be  
Happy, and make all others happy so  
They did not thwart me. Nay, she will not  
come.

Yet if she be a true and loving wife  
She may, perchance, to save this husband. Ay!  
See, see, my white bird stepping toward the  
snare.

Why now I count it all but miracle,  
That this brave heart of mine should shake  
me so,

As helplessly as some unbearded boy's  
When first he meets his maiden in a bower.

[*Enter CAMMA (with cup).*]



## THE CUP

ACT I

The lark first takes the sunlight on his wing,  
But you, twin sister of the morning star,  
Forelead the sun.

CAMMA.                   Where is Antonius?

SYNORIX. Not here as yet. You are too early  
for him.                   *[She crosses towards Temple.]*

SYNORIX. Nay, whither go you now?

CAMMA.                   To lodge this cup  
Within the holy shrine of Artemis,  
And so return.

SYNORIX.               To find Antonius here.

*[She goes into the Temple, he looks after her.]*

The loveliest life that ever drew the light  
From heaven to brood upon her, and enrich  
Earth with her shadow! I trust she *will* return.  
These Romans dare not violate the Temple.  
No, I must lure my game into the camp.  
A woman I could live and die for. What!  
Die for a woman, what new faith is this?  
I am not mad, not sick, not old enough  
To doat on one alone. Yes, mad for her,  
Camma the stately, Camma the great-hearted,  
So mad, I fear some strange and evil chance  
Coming upon me, for by the Gods I seem  
Strange to myself.

*Re-enter CAMMA*

CAMMA.                   Where is Antonius?

SYNORIX. Where? As I said before, you are  
still too early.

CAMMA. Too early to be here alone with thee ;  
For whether men malign thy name, or no,  
It bears an evil savour among women.  
Where is Antonius ? (*Loud.*)

SYNORIX. Madam, as you know  
The camp is half a league without the city ;  
If you will walk with me we needs must meet  
Antonius coming, or at least shall find him  
There in the camp.

CAMMA. No, not one step with thee.  
Where is Antonius ? (*Louder.*)

SYNORIX (*advancing towards her*). Then for  
your own sake,  
Lady, I say it with all gentleness,  
And for the sake of Sinnatus your husband,  
I must compel you.

CAMMA (*drawing her dagger*). Stay !—too  
near is death.

SYNORIX (*disarming her*). Is it not easy to  
disarm a woman ?

*Enter SINNATUS (seizes him from behind by the throat)*

SYNORIX (*throttled and scarce audible*). Rome !  
Rome !

SINNATUS. Adulterous dog !

SYNORIX (*stabbing him with CAMMA's dagger*).  
What ! will you have it ?

[CAMMA utters a cry and runs to SINNATUS.

# THE CUP

ACT I

SINNATUS (*falls backward*). I have it in my heart—to the Temple—fly—  
For *my* sake—or they seize on thee. Remember!  
Away—farewell! [*Dies.*]

CAMMA (*runs up the steps into the Temple, looking back*). Farewell!

SYNORIX (*seeing her escape*). The women of the Temple drag her in.  
Publius! Publius! No,  
Antonius would not suffer me to break  
Into the sanctuary. She hath escaped.

[*Looking down at SINNATUS.*]

‘Adulterous dog!’ that red-faced rage at me!  
Then with one quick short stab—eternal peace.  
So end all passions. Then what use in passions?  
To warm the cold bounds of our dying life  
And, lest we freeze in mortal apathy,  
Employ us, heat us, quicken us, help us, keep us  
From seeing all too near that urn, those ashes  
Which all must be. Well used, they serve us well.  
I heard a saying in Egypt, that ambition  
Is like the sea wave, which the more you drink,  
The more you thirst—yea—drink too much, as  
men

Have done on rafts of wreck—it drives you mad.  
I will be no such wreck, am no such gamester  
As, having won the stake, would dare the chance  
Of double, or losing all. The Roman Senate,  
For I have always play’d into their hands,  
Means me the crown. And Camma for my  
bride—

The people love her—if I win her love,  
They too will cleave to me, as one with her.  
There then I rest, Rome's tributary king.

[*Looking down on SINNATUS.*

Why did I strike him?—having proof enough  
Against the man, I surely should have left  
That stroke to Rome. He saved my life too.

Did he?

It seem'd so. I have play'd the sudden fool.  
And that sets her against me—for the moment.  
Camma—well, well, I never found the woman  
I could not force or wheedle to my will.  
She will be glad at last to wear my crown.  
And I will make Galatia prosperous too,  
And we will chirp among our vines, and smile  
At bygone things till that (*pointing to SINNATUS*)  
eternal peace.

Rome! Rome! [*Enter PUBLIUS and SOLDIERS.*

Twice I cried Rome. Why came ye not before?

PUBLIUS. Why come we now? Whom shall  
we seize upon?

SYNORIX (*pointing to the body of SINNATUS*).

The body of that dead traitor Sinnatus.  
Bear him away.

*Music and Singing in Temple*

## ACT II

SCENE.—INTERIOR OF THE TEMPLE OF ARTEMIS

*Small gold gates on platform in front of the veil before the colossal statue of the Goddess, and in the centre of the Temple a tripod altar, on which is a lighted lamp. Lamps (lighted) suspended between each pillar. Tripods, vases, garlands of flowers, etc., about stage. Altar at back close to Goddess, with two cups. Solemn music. PRIESTESSES decorating the Temple.*

*(The Chorus of PRIESTESSES sing as they enter)*

Artemis, Artemis, hear us, O Mother, hear us,  
and bless us !

Artemis, thou that art life to the wind, to the  
wave, to the glebe, to the fire !

Hear thy people who praise thee ! O help us  
from all that oppress us !

Hear thy priestesses hymn thy glory ! O yield  
them all their desire !

PRIESTESS. Phœbe, that man from Synorix,  
who has been

So oft to see the Priestess, waits once more  
Before the Temple.

PHŒBE. We will let her know.

[*Signs to one of the PRIESTESSES, who goes out.*

Since Camma fled from Synorix to our Temple,  
And for her beauty, stateliness, and power,  
Was chosen Priestess here, have you not mark'd  
Her eyes were ever on the marble floor?  
To-day they are fixt and bright—they look  
straight out.

Hath she made up her mind to marry him?

PRIESTESS. To marry him who stabb'd her  
Sinnatus.

You will not easily make me credit that.

PHŒBE. Ask her.

*Enter CAMMA as Priestess (in front of the curtains)*

PRIESTESS. You will not marry Synorix?

CAMMA. My girl, I am the bride of Death,  
and only  
Marry the dead.

PRIESTESS. Not Synorix then?

CAMMA. My girl,  
At times this oracle of great Artemis  
Has no more power than other oracles  
To speak directly.

PHŒBE. Will you speak to him,  
The messenger from Synorix who waits  
Before the Temple?

CAMMA. Why not? Let him enter.

[*Comes forward on to step by tripod.*

## THE CUP

ACT II

*Enter a MESSENGER*

MESSENGER (*kneels*). Greeting and health  
from Synorix! More than once  
You have refused his hand. When last I saw  
you,  
You all but yielded. He entreats you now  
For your last answer. When he struck at  
Sinnatus—

As I have many a time declared to you—  
He knew not at the moment who had fasten'd  
About his throat—he begs you to forget it.  
As scarce his act :—a random stroke : all else  
Was love for you : he prays you to believe him.

CAMMA. I pray him to believe—that I believe  
him.

MESSENGER. Why that is well. You mean  
to marry him ?

CAMMA. I mean to marry him—if that be  
well.

MESSENGER. This very day the Romans crown  
him king  
For all his faithful services to Rome.  
He wills you then this day to marry him,  
And so be throned together in the sight  
Of all the people, that the world may know  
You twain are reconciled, and no more feuds  
Disturb our peaceful vassalage to Rome.

CAMMA. To-day? Too sudden. I will brood  
upon it.  
When do they crown him ?

MESSENGER. Even now.

CAMMA. And where?

MESSENGER. Here by your temple.

CAMMA. Come once more to me  
Before the crowning,—I will answer you.

[Exit MESSENGER.]

PHCEBE. Great Artemis! O Camma, can it  
be well,

Or good, or wise, that you should clasp a hand  
Red with the sacred blood of Sinnatus?

CAMMA. Good! mine own dagger driven by  
Synorix found

All good in the true heart of Sinnatus,

And quench'd it there for ever. Wise!

Life yields to death and wisdom bows to Fate,

Is wisest, doing so. Did not this man

Speak well? We cannot fight imperial Rome,

But he and I are both Galatian-born,

And tributary sovereigns, he and I

Might teach this Rome—from knowledge of  
our people—

Where to lay on her tribute—heavily here

And lightly there. Might I not live for that,

And drown all poor self-passion in the sense

Of public good?

PHCEBE. I am sure you will not marry him.

CAMMA. Are you so sure? I pray you wait  
and see.

[Shouts (*from the distance*), 'Synorix! Synorix!']

CAMMA. Synorix, Synorix! So they cried  
Sinnatus



# THE CUP

ACT II

Not so long since—they sicken me. The One  
Who shifts his policy suffers something, must  
Accuse himself, excuse himself; the Many  
Will feel no shame to give themselves the lie.

PHCEBE. Most like it was the Roman soldier  
shouted.

CAMMA. Their shield-borne patriot of the  
morning star  
Hang'd at mid-day, their traitor of the dawn  
The clamour'd darling of their afternoon!  
And that same head they would have play'd  
at ball with  
And kick'd it featureless—they now would crown.  
[*Flourish of trumpets.*]

*Enter a Galatian NOBLEMAN with crown on a cushion*

NOBLE (*kneels*). Greeting and health from  
Synorix. He sends you  
This diadem of the first Galatian Queen,  
That you may feed your fancy on the glory of it,  
And join your life this day with his, and wear it  
Beside him on his throne. He waits your  
answer.

CAMMA. Tell him there is one shadow among  
the shadows,  
One ghost of all the ghosts—as yet so new,  
So strange among them—such an alien there,  
So much of husband in it still—that if  
The shout of Synorix and Camma sitting  
Upon one throne, should reach it, *it* would rise

*He ! . . .* HE, with that red star between the ribs,  
And my knife there—and blast the king and me,  
And blanch the crowd with horror. I dare not,  
sir !

Throne him—and then the marriage—ay and  
tell him

That I accept the diadem of Galatia—

*[All are amazed.*

Yea, that ye saw me crown myself withal.

*[Puts on the crown.*

I wait him his crown'd queen.

NOBLE.

So will I tell him. *[Exit.*

*Music. Two PRIESTESSES go up the steps before the shrine, draw the curtains on either side (discovering the Goddess), then open the gates and remain on steps, one on either side, and kneel. A PRIESTESS goes off and returns with a veil of marriage, then assists PHŒBE to veil CAMMA. At the same time PRIESTESSES enter and stand on either side of the Temple. CAMMA and all the PRIESTESSES kneel, raise their hands to the Goddess, and bow down.*

*[Shouts, 'Synorix ! Synorix !' All rise.*

CAMMA. Fling wide the doors and let the  
new-made children  
Of our imperial mother see the show.

*[Sunlight pours through the doors.*

I have no heart to do it. *(To PHŒBE.)* Look  
for me !

*[Crouches. PHŒBE looks out.*

*[Shouts, 'Synorix ! Synorix !'*

# THE CUP

ACT II

PHŒBE. He climbs the throne. Hot blood,  
ambition, pride  
So bloat and redden his face—O would it were  
His third last apoplexy! O bestial!  
O how unlike our goodly Sinnatus.

CAMMA (*on the ground*). You wrong him  
surely; far as the face goes  
A goodlier-looking man than Sinnatus.

PHŒBE (*aside*). How dare she say it? I could  
hate her for it  
But that she is distracted.

[*A flourish of trumpets.*

CAMMA. Is he crowned?

PHŒBE. Ay, there they crown him.

[*Crowd without shout, 'Synorix! Synorix!'*

[*A PRIESTESS brings a box of spices to CAMMA,  
who throws them on the altar-flame.*

CAMMA. Rouse the dead altar-flame, fling in  
the spices,  
Nard, cinnamon, amomum, benzoin.  
Let all the air reel into a mist of odour,  
As in the midmost heart of Paradise.  
Lay down the Lydian carpets for the king.  
The king should pace on purple to his bride,  
And music there to greet my lord the king.

[*Music.*

(*To PHŒBE.*) Dost thou remember when I  
wedded Sinnatus?

Ay, thou wast there—whether from maiden fears  
Or reverential love for him I loved,  
Or some strange second-sight, the marriage cup

Wherefrom we make libation to the Goddess  
 So shook within my hand, that the red wine  
 Ran down the marble and lookt like blood, like  
 blood.

PHCEBE. I do remember your first-marriage  
 fears.

CAMMA. I have no fears at this my second  
 marriage.

See here—I stretch my hand out—hold it there.  
 How steady it is !

PHCEBE. Steady enough to stab him !

CAMMA. O hush ! O peace ! This violence  
 ill becomes

The silence of our Temple. Gentleness,  
 Low words best chime with this solemnity.

*Enter a procession of PRIESTESSES and CHILDREN bearing  
 garlands and golden goblets, and strewing flowers.*

*Enter SYNORIX (as King, with gold laurel-wreath  
 crown and purple robes), followed by ANTONIUS,  
 PUBLIUS, NOBLEMEN, GUARDS, and the POPULACE.*

CAMMA. Hail, King !

SYNORIX. Hail, Queen !

The wheel of Fate has roll'd me to the top.  
 I would that happiness were gold, that I  
 Might cast my largess of it to the crowd !  
 I would that every man made feast to-day  
 Beneath the shadow of our pines and planes !  
 For all my truer life begins to-day.  
 The past is like a travell'd land now sunk

# THE CUP

ACT II

Below the horizon—like a barren shore  
That grew salt weeds, but now all drown'd in love  
And glittering at full tide—the bounteous bays  
And havens filling with a blissful sea.  
Nor speak I now too mightily, being King  
And happy ! happiest, Lady, in my power  
To make you happy.

CAMMA. Yes, sir.

SYNORIX. Our Antonius,  
Our faithful friend of Rome, tho' Rome may set  
A free foot where she will, yet of his courtesy  
Entreats he may be present at our marriage.

CAMMA. Let him come—a legion with him,  
if he will.

(To ANTONIUS.) Welcome, my lord Antonius,  
to our Temple.

(To SYNORIX.) You on this side the altar. (To  
ANTONIUS.) You on that.

Call first upon the Goddess, Synorix.

[*All face the Goddess.* PRIESTESSES, CHILDREN,  
POPULACE, and GUARDS kneel—the others  
remain standing.]

SYNORIX. O Thou, that dost inspire the germ  
with life,  
The child, a thread within the house of birth,  
And give him limbs, then air, and send him  
forth  
The glory of his father—Thou whose breath  
Is balmy wind to robe our hills with grass,  
And kindle all our vales with myrtle-blossom,  
And roll the golden oceans of our grain,

And sway the long grape-bunches of our vines,  
And fill all hearts with fatness and the lust  
Of plenty—make me happy in my marriage !

CHORUS (*chanting*). Artemis, Artemis, hear  
him, Ionian Artemis !

CAMMA. O Thou that slayest the babe  
within the womb  
Or in the being born, or after slayest him  
As boy or man, great Goddess, whose storm-  
voice

Unsockets the strong oak, and rears his root  
Beyond his head, and strows our fruits, and lays  
Our golden grain, and runs to sea and makes it  
Foam over all the fleeted wealth of kings  
And peoples, hear.

Whose arrow is the plague—whose quick flash  
splits

The mid-sea mast, and rifts the tower to the  
rock,

And hurls the victor's column down with him  
That crowns it, hear.

Who causeth the safe earth to shudder and gape,  
And gulf and flatten in her closing chasm  
Domed cities, hear.

Whose lava-torrents blast and blacken a province  
To a cinder, hear.

Whose winter-cataracts find a realm and leave it  
A waste of rock and ruin, hear. I call thee  
To make my marriage prosper to my wish !

CHORUS. Artemis, Artemis, hear her, Ephesian  
Artemis !

# THE CUP

ACT II

CAMMA. Artemis, Artemis, hear me, Galatian  
Artemis !

I call on our own Goddess in our own Temple.

CHORUS. Artemis, Artemis, hear her, Galatian  
Artemis ! *[Thunder. All rise.]*

SYNORIX *(aside)*. Thunder ! Ay, ay, the  
storm was drawing hither

Across the hills when I was being crown'd.

I wonder if I look as pale as she ?

CAMMA. Art thou—still bent—on marrying ?

SYNORIX. Surely—yet

These are strange words to speak to Artemis.

CAMMA. Words are not always what they  
seem, my King.

I will be faithful to thee till thou die.

SYNORIX. I thank thee, Camma,—I thank  
thee.

CAMMA *(turning to ANTONIUS)*. Antonius,  
Much graced are we that our Queen Rome in you  
Deigns to look in upon our barbarisms.

*[Turns, goes up steps to altar before the Goddess.  
Takes a cup from off the altar. Holds it  
towards ANTONIUS. ANTONIUS goes up to  
the foot of the steps opposite to SYNORIX.]*

You see this cup, my lord. *[Gives it to him.]*

ANTONIUS. Most curious !

The many-breasted mother Artemis

Emboss'd upon it.

CAMMA. It is old, I know not

How many hundred years. Give it me again.

It is the cup belonging our own Temple.

*[Puts it back on altar, and takes up the cup of Act I. Showing it to ANTONIUS.]*

Here is another sacred to the Goddess,  
The gift of Synorix ; and the Goddess, being  
For this most grateful, wills, thro' me her  
Priestess,

In honour of his gift and of our marriage,  
That Synorix should drink from his own cup.

SYNORIX. I thank thee, Camma,—I thank  
thee.

CAMMA. For—my lord—  
It is our ancient custom in Galatia  
That ere two souls be knit for life and death,  
They two should drink together from one cup,  
In symbol of their married unity,  
Making libation to the Goddess. Bring me  
The costly wines we use in marriages.

*[They bring in a large jar of wine. CAMMA  
pours wine into cup.]*

(To SYNORIX.) See here, I fill it. (To ANTONIUS.)  
Will you drink, my lord ?

ANTONIUS. I ? Why should I ? I am not  
to be married.

CAMMA. But that might bring a Roman  
blessing on us.

ANTONIUS (*refusing cup*). Thy pardon, Priestess !

CAMMA. Thou art in the right.  
This blessing is for Synorix and for me.  
See first I make libation to the Goddess,

*[Makes libation.]*

And now I drink. *[Drinks and fills the cup again.]*



# THE CUP

ACT II

Thy turn, Galatian King.  
 Drink and drink deep—our marriage will be  
 fruitful.

Drink and drink deep, and thou wilt make me  
 happy.

[SYNORIX goes up to her. She hands him the cup.  
 He drinks.]

SYNORIX. There, Camma! I have almost  
 drain'd the cup—  
 A few drops left.

CAMMA. Libation to the Goddess.

[He throws the remaining drops on the altar and  
 gives CAMMA the cup.]

CAMMA (*placing the cup on the altar*). Why  
 then the Goddess hears.

[Comes down and forward to tripod. ANTONIUS  
 follows.]

Antonius,  
 Where wast thou on that morning when I came  
 To plead to thee for Sinnatus's life,  
 Beside this temple half a year ago?

ANTONIUS. I never heard of this request of  
 thine.

SYNORIX (*coming forward hastily to foot of tripod  
 steps*). I sought him and I could not find  
 him. Pray you,  
 Go on with the marriage rites.

CAMMA.

Antonius——

'Camma!' who spake?

ANTONIUS.

Not I.

PHŒBE.

Nor any here.

CAMMA. I am all but sure that some one  
spake. Antonius,  
If you had found him plotting against Rome,  
Would you have tortured Sinnatus to death?

ANTONIUS. No thought was mine of torture  
or of death,  
But had I found him plotting, I had counsell'd  
him  
To rest from vain resistance. Rome is fated  
To rule the world. Then, if he had not listen'd,  
I might have sent him prisoner to Rome.

SYNORIX. Why do you palter with the  
ceremony?  
Go on with the marriage rites.

CAMMA. They are finish'd.

SYNORIX. How!

CAMMA. Thou hast drunk deep enough to  
make me happy.  
Dost thou not feel the love I bear to thee  
Glow thro' thy veins?

SYNORIX. The love I bear to thee  
Glow's thro' my veins since first I look'd on  
thee.

But wherefore slur the perfect ceremony?  
The sovereign of Galatia weds his Queen.  
Let all be done to the fullest in the sight  
Of all the Gods.

Nay, rather than so clip  
The flowery robe of Hymen, we would add  
Some golden fringe of gorgeousness beyond  
Old use, to make the day memorial, when

# THE CUP

ACT II

Synorix, first King, Camma, first Queen o' the  
Realm,

Drew here the richest lot from Fate, to live  
And die together.

                    This pain—what is it?—again?  
I had a touch of this last year—in—Rome.

Yes, yes. (*To ANTONIUS.*) Your arm—a  
moment—It will pass.

I reel beneath the weight of utter joy—  
This all too happy day, crown—queen at once.

[*Staggers.*]

O all ye Gods—Jupiter!—Jupiter!

[*Falls backward.*]

CAMMA. Dost thou cry out upon the Gods  
of Rome?

Thou art Galatian-born. Our Artemis  
Has vanquish'd their Diana.

SYNORIX (*on the ground*). I am poison'd.  
She—close the Temple door. Let her not fly.

CAMMA (*leaning on tripod*). Have I not drunk  
of the same cup with thee?

SYNORIX. Ay, by the Gods of Rome and all  
the world,  
She too—she too—the bride! the Queen! and  
I—

Monstrous! I that loved her.

CAMMA. I loved *him*.

SYNORIX. O murderous mad-woman! I pray  
you lift me  
And make me walk awhile. I have heard these  
poisons

May be walk'd down.

[ANTONIUS and PUBLIUS raise him up.

My feet are tons of lead,  
They will break in the earth—I am sinking—  
hold me—

Let me alone.

[*They leave him ; he sinks down on ground.*

Too late—thought myself wise—  
A woman's dupe. Antonius, tell the Senate  
I have been most true to Rome—would have  
been true

To her—if—if—— [Falls as if dead.

CAMMA (*coming and leaning over him*). So falls  
the throne of an hour.

SYNORIX (*half rising*). Throne? is it thou?  
the Fates are throned, not we—  
Not guilty of ourselves—thy doom and mine—  
Thou—coming my way too—Camma—good-  
night. [Dies.

CAMMA (*upheld by weeping PRIESTESSES*). Thy  
way? poor worm, crawl down thine own  
black hole

To the lowest Hell. Antonius, is *he* there?  
I meant thee to have follow'd—better thus.  
Nay, if my people must be thralls of Rome,  
He is gentle, tho' a Roman.

[Sinks back into the arms of the PRIESTESSES.

ANTONIUS. Thou art one  
With thine own people, and though a Roman I  
Forgive thee, Camma.

# THE CUP

ACT II

CAMMA (*raising herself*). 'CAMMA !'—why  
there again

I am most sure that some one call'd. O women,  
Ye will have Roman masters. I am glad  
I shall not see it. Did not some old Greek  
Say death was the chief good ? He had my fate  
for it,

Poison'd. (*Sinks back again.*) Have I the  
crown on ? I will go

To meet him, crown'd ! crown'd victor of my  
will—

On my last voyage—but the wind has fail'd—  
Growing dark too—but light enough to row.  
Row to the blessed Isles ! the blessed Isles !—  
Sinnatus !

Why comes he not to meet me ? It is the  
crown

Offends him—and my hands are too sleepy  
To lift it off.

[*PHŒBE takes the crown off.*

Who touch'd me then ? I thank you.

[*Rises, with outspread arms.*

There—league on league of ever-shining shore  
Beneath an ever-rising sun—I see him—

'Camma, Camma !' Sinnatus, Sinnatus !

[*Dies.*

# THE FALCON



DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

THE COUNT FEDERIGO DEGLI ALBERIGHI.

FILIPPO, *Count's foster-brother.*

THE LADY GIOVANNA.

ELISABETTA, *the Count's nurse.*





## THE FALCON

SCENE.—AN ITALIAN COTTAGE. CASTLE AND MOUNTAINS SEEN THROUGH WINDOW.

ELISABETTA *discovered seated on stool in window darning.*  
*The COUNT with Falcon on his hand comes down through the door at back. A withered wreath on the wall.*

ELISABETTA. So, my lord, the Lady Giovanna, who hath been away so long, came back last night with her son to the castle.

COUNT. Hear that, my bird ! Art thou not  
jealous of her ?

My princess of the cloud, my plumed purveyor,  
My far-eyed queen of the winds—thou that canst  
soar

Beyond the morning lark, and howsoe'er  
Thy quarry wind and wheel, swoop down upon  
him

Eagle-like, lightning-like—strike, make his  
feathers

Glance in mid heaven. [Crosses to chair.  
I would thou hadst a mate !

## THE FALCON

Thy breed will die with thee, and mine with me :  
I am as lone and loveless as thyself.

[*Sits in chair.*

Giovanna here ! Ay, ruffle thyself—*be* jealous !  
Thou should'st be jealous of her. Tho' I bred  
thee

The full-train'd marvel of all falconry,  
And love thee and thou me, yet if Giovanna  
Be here again—No, no ! Buss me, my bird !  
The stately widow has no heart for me.  
Thou art the last friend left me upon earth—  
No, no again to that. [*Rises and turns.*

My good old nurse,  
I had forgotten thou wast sitting there.

ELISABETTA. Ay, and forgotten thy foster-  
brother too.

COUNT. Bird-babble for my falcon ! Let it  
pass.

What art thou doing there ?

ELISABETTA. Darning, your lordship.  
We cannot flaunt it in new feathers now :  
Nay, if we *will* buy diamond necklaces  
To please our lady, we must darn, my lord.  
This old thing here (*points to necklace round her  
neck*), they are but blue beads—my Piero,  
God rest his honest soul, he bought 'em for me,  
Ay, but he knew I meant to marry him.  
How couldst thou do it, my son ? How couldst  
thou do it ?

COUNT. She saw it at a dance, upon a neck  
Less lovely than her own, and long'd for it.

## THE FALCON

ELISABETTA. She told thee as much ?

COUNT. No, no—a friend of hers.

ELISABETTA. Shame on her that she took it  
at thy hands,

She rich enough to have bought it for herself !

COUNT. She would have robb'd me then of a  
great pleasure.

ELISABETTA. But hath she yet return'd thy  
love ?

COUNT. Not yet !

ELISABETTA. She should return thy necklace  
then.

COUNT. Ay, if

She knew the giver ; but I bound the seller  
To silence, and I left it privily  
At Florence, in her palace.

ELISABETTA. And sold thine own  
To buy it for her. She not know ? She knows  
There's none such other——

COUNT. Madman anywhere.  
Speak freely, tho' to call a madman mad  
Will hardly help to make him sane again.

*Enter FILIPPO*

FILIPPO. Ah, the women, the women ! Ah,  
Monna Giovanna, you here again ! you that have  
the face of an angel and the heart of a—that's  
too positive ! You that have a score of lovers  
and have not a heart for any of them—that's  
positive-negative : you that have *not* the head of

## THE FALCON

a toad, and *not* a heart like the jewel in it—that's too negative ; you that have a cheek like a peach and a heart like the stone in it—that's positive again—that's better !

ELISABETTA. Sh—sh—Filippo !

FILIPPO (*turns half round*). Here has our master been a-glorifying and a-velveting and a-silking himself, and a-peacocking and a-spreading to catch her eye for a dozen year, till he hasn't an eye left in his own tail to flourish among the peahens, and all along o' you, Monna Giovanna, all along o' you !

ELISABETTA. Sh—sh—Filippo ! Can't you hear that you are saying behind his back what you see you are saying afore his face ?

COUNT. Let him—he never spares me to my face !

FILIPPO. No, my lord, I never spare your lordship to your lordship's face, nor behind your lordship's back, nor to right, nor to left, nor to round about and back to your lordship's face again, for I'm honest, your lordship.

COUNT. Come, come, Filippo, what is there in the larder ?

[ELISABETTA *crosses to fireplace and puts on wood.*

FILIPPO. Shelves and hooks, shelves and hooks, and when I see the shelves I am like to hang myself on the hooks.

COUNT. No bread ?

FILIPPO. Half a breakfast for a rat !

COUNT. Milk ?

## THE FALCON

FILIPPO. Three laps for a cat !

COUNT. Cheese ?

FILIPPO. A supper for twelve mites.

COUNT. Eggs ?

FILIPPO. One, but addled.

COUNT. No bird ?

FILIPPO. Half a tit and a hern's bill.

COUNT. Let be thy jokes and thy jerks, man !  
Anything or nothing ?

FILIPPO. Well, my lord, if all-but-nothing be anything, and one plate of dried prunes be all-but-nothing, then there is anything in your lordship's larder at your lordship's service, if your lordship care to call for it.

COUNT. Good mother, happy was the prodigal son,

For he return'd to the rich father ; I  
But add my poverty to thine. And all  
Thro' following of my fancy. Pray thee make  
Thy slender meal out of those scraps and shreds  
Filippo spoke of. As for him and me,  
There sprouts a salad in the garden still.

(*To the Falcon.*) Why didst thou miss thy  
quarry yester-even ?

To-day, my beauty, thou must dash us down  
Our dinner from the skies. Away, Filippo !

[*Exit, followed by FILIPPO.*]

ELISABETTA. I knew it would come to this.  
She has beggared him. I always knew it would  
come to this ! (*Goes up to table as if to resume  
darning, and looks out of window.*) Why, as I live,

## THE FALCON

there is Monna Giovanna coming down the hill from the castle. Stops and stares at our cottage. Ay, ay! stare at it: it's all you have left us. Shame on you! *She* beautiful: sleek as a miller's mouse! Meal enough, meat enough, well fed; but beautiful—bah! Nay, see, why she turns down the path through our little vineyard, and I sneezed three times this morning. Coming to visit my lord, for the first time in her life too! Why, bless the saints! I'll be bound to confess her love to him at last. I forgive her, I forgive her! I knew it would come to this—I always knew it must come to this! (*Going up to door during latter part of speech and opens it.*) Come in, Madonna, come in. (*Retires to front of table and curtsies as the LADY GIOVANNA enters, then moves chair towards the hearth.*) Nay, let me place this chair for your ladyship.

[LADY GIOVANNA *moves slowly down stage, then crosses to chair, looking about her, bows as she sees the Madonna over fireplace, then sits in chair.*

LADY GIOVANNA. Can I speak with the Count?

ELISABETTA. Ay, my lady, but won't you speak with the old woman first, and tell her all about it and make her happy? for I've been on my knees every day for these half-dozen years in hope that the saints would send us this blessed morning; and he always took you so kindly, he always took the world so kindly. When he was

## THE FALCON

a little one, and I put the bitters on my breast to wean him, he made a wry mouth at it, but he took it so kindly, and your ladyship has given him bitters enough in this world, and he never made a wry mouth at you, he always took you so kindly—which is more than I did, my lady, more than I did—and he so handsome—and bless your sweet face, you look as beautiful this morning as the very Madonna her own self—and better late than never—but come when they will—then or now—it's all for the best, come when they will—they are made by the blessed saints—these marriages.

[*Raises her hands.*

LADY GIOVANNA. Marriages? I shall never marry again!

ELISABETTA (*rises and turns*). Shame on her then!

LADY GIOVANNA. Where is the Count?

ELISABETTA. Just gone  
To fly his falcon.

LADY GIOVANNA. Call him back and say  
I come to breakfast with him.

ELISABETTA. Holy mother!  
To breakfast! Oh sweet saints! one plate of  
prunes!

Well, Madam, I will give your message to him.  
[*Exit.*

LADY GIOVANNA. His falcon, and I come to  
ask for his falcon,  
The pleasure of his eyes—boast of his hand—



## THE FALCON

Pride of his heart—the solace of his hours—  
His one companion here—nay, I have heard  
That, thro' his late magnificence of living  
And this last costly gift to mine own self,

*[Shows diamond necklace.]*

He hath become so beggar'd, that his falcon  
Ev'n wins his dinner for him in the field.  
That must be talk, not truth, but truth or talk,  
How can I ask for his falcon?

*[Rises and moves as she speaks.]*

O my sick boy!

My daily fading Florio, it is thou  
Hath set me this hard task, for when I say  
What can I do—what can I get for thee?  
He answers, 'Get the Count to give me his  
falcon,

And that will make me well.' Yet if I ask,  
He loves me, and he knows I know he loves me!  
Will he not pray me to return his love—  
To marry him?—*(pause)*—I can never marry him.  
His grandsire struck my grandsire in a brawl  
At Florence, and my grandsire stabb'd him there.  
The feud between our houses is the bar  
I cannot cross; I dare not brave my brother,  
Break with my kin. My brother hates him,  
scorns

The noblest-natured man alive, and I—  
Who have that reverence for him that I scarce  
Dare beg him to receive his diamonds back—  
How can I, dare I, ask him for his falcon?

*[Puts diamonds in her casket.]*

## THE FALCON

*Re-enter* COUNT and FILIPPO. COUNT *turns to* FILIPPO.

COUNT. Do what I said ; I cannot do it myself.

FILIPPO. Why then, my lord, we are pauper'd out and out.

COUNT. Do what I said !

*[Advances and bows low.]*

Welcome to this poor cottage, my dear lady.

LADY GIOVANNA. And welcome turns a cottage to a palace.

COUNT. 'Tis long since we have met !

LADY GIOVANNA. To make amends I come this day to break my fast with you.

COUNT. I am much honour'd—yes—

*[Turns to FILIPPO.]*

Do what I told thee. Must I do it myself ?

FILIPPO. I will, I will. (*Sighs.*) Poor fellow !  
*[Exit.]*

COUNT. Lady, you bring your light into my cottage

Who never deign'd to shine into my palace.

My palace wanting you was but a cottage ;

My cottage, while you grace it, is a palace.

LADY GIOVANNA. In cottage or in palace, being still

Beyond your fortunes, you are still the king

Of courtesy and liberality.

COUNT. I trust I still maintain my courtesy ;

My liberality perforce is dead

Thro' lack of means of giving.

## THE FALCON

LADY GIOVANNA.  
To ask a gift.

Yet I come

[*Moves toward him a little.*]

COUNT. It will be hard, I fear,  
To find one shock upon the field when all  
The harvest has been carried.

LADY GIOVANNA. But my boy—  
(*Aside.*) No, no ! not yet—I cannot !

COUNT. Ay, how is he,  
That bright inheritor of your eyes—your boy ?

LADY GIOVANNA. Alas, my Lord Federigo,  
he hath fallen  
Into a sickness, and it troubles me.

COUNT. Sick ! is it so ? why, when he  
came last year  
To see me hawking, he was well enough :  
And then I taught him all our hawking-phrases.

LADY GIOVANNA. Oh yes, and once you let  
him fly your falcon.

COUNT. How charm'd he was ! what  
wonder ?—A gallant boy,  
A noble bird, each perfect of the breed.

LADY GIOVANNA (*sinks in chair*). What do  
you rate her at ?

COUNT. My bird ? a hundred  
Gold pieces once were offer'd by the Duke.  
I had no heart to part with her for money.

LADY GIOVANNA. No, not for money.  
[*COUNT turns away and sighs.*]

Wherefore do you sigh ?

COUNT. I have lost a friend of late.

## THE FALCON

LADY GIOVANNA. I could sigh with you  
For fear of losing more than friend, a son ;  
And if he leave me—all the rest of life—  
That wither'd wreath were of more worth to me.

[*Looking at wreath on wall.*]

COUNT. That wither'd wreath is of more  
worth to me  
Than all the blossom, all the leaf of this  
New-wakening year.

[*Goes and takes down wreath.*]

LADY GIOVANNA. And yet I never saw  
The land so rich in blossom as this year.

COUNT (*holding wreath toward her*). Was not  
the year when this was gather'd richer ?

LADY GIOVANNA. How long ago was that ?

COUNT. Alas, ten summers !

A lady that was beautiful as day  
Sat by me at a rustic festival  
With other beauties on a mountain meadow,  
And she was the most beautiful of all ;  
Then but fifteen, and still as beautiful.  
The mountain flowers grew thickly round about.  
I made a wreath with some of these ; I ask'd  
A ribbon from her hair to bind it with ;  
I whisper'd, Let me crown you Queen of  
Beauty,  
And softly placed the chaplet on her head.  
A colour, which has colour'd all my life,  
Flush'd in her face ; then I was call'd away ;  
And presently all rose, and so departed.

## THE FALCON

Ah ! she had thrown my chaplet on the grass,  
And there I found it.

*[Lets his hands fall, holding wreath despondingly.]*

LADY GIOVANNA *(after pause)*. How long  
since do you say ?

COUNT. That was the very year before you  
married.

LADY GIOVANNA. When I was married you  
were at the wars.

COUNT. Had she not thrown my chaplet on  
the grass,  
It may be I had never seen the wars.

*[Replaces wreath whence he had taken it.]*

LADY GIOVANNA. Ah, but, my lord, there  
ran a rumour then  
That you were kill'd in battle. I can tell you  
True tears that year were shed for you in  
Florence.

COUNT. It might have been as well for me.  
Unhappily  
I was but wounded by the enemy there  
And then imprison'd.

LADY GIOVANNA. Happily, however,  
I see you quite recover'd of your wound.

COUNT. No, no, not quite, Madonna, not  
yet, not yet.

*Re-enter FILIPPO*

FILIPPO. My lord, a word with you.

COUNT. Pray, pardon me !

## THE FALCON

[LADY GIOVANNA *crosses, and passes behind chair and takes down wreath; then goes to chair by table.*

COUNT (*to* FILIPPO). What is it, Filippo?

FILIPPO. Spoons, your lordship.

COUNT. Spoons!

FILIPPO. Yes, my lord, for wasn't my lady born with a golden spoon in her ladyship's mouth, and we haven't never so much as a silver one for the golden lips of her ladyship.

COUNT. Have we not half a score of silver spoons?

FILIPPO. Half o' one, my lord!

COUNT. How half of one?

FILIPPO. I trod upon him even now, my lord, in my hurry, and broke him.

COUNT. And the other nine?

FILIPPO. Sold! but shall I not mount with your lordship's leave to her ladyship's castle, in your lordship's and her ladyship's name, and confer with her ladyship's seneschal, and so descend again with some of her ladyship's own appurtenances?

COUNT. Why—no, man. Only see your cloth be clean.

[*Exit* FILIPPO.]

LADY GIOVANNA. Ay, ay, this faded ribbon  
was the mode

In Florence ten years back. What's here? a  
scroll

Pinned to the wreath.

## THE FALCON

My lord, you have said so much  
Of this poor wreath that I was bold enough  
To take it down, if but to guess what flowers  
Had made it ; and I find a written scroll  
That seems to run in rhymings. Might I  
read ?

COUNT. Ay, if you will.

LADY GIOVANNA. It should be if you can.  
(*Reads.*) 'Dead mountain.' Nay, for who could  
trace a hand  
So wild and staggering ?

COUNT. This was penn'd, Madonna,  
Close to the grating on a winter morn  
In the perpetual twilight of a prison,  
When he that made it, having his right hand  
Lamed in the battle, wrote it with his left.

LADY GIOVANNA. O heavens ! the very  
letters seem to shake  
With cold, with pain perhaps, poor prisoner !  
Well,  
Tell me the words—or better—for I see  
There goes a musical score along with them,  
Repeat them to their music.

COUNT. You can touch  
No chord in me that would not answer you  
In music.

LADY GIOVANNA. That is musically said.

[COUNT *takes guitar.* LADY GIOVANNA *sits listening with wreath in her hand, and quietly removes scroll and places it on table at the end of the song.*

## THE FALCON

COUNT (*sings, playing guitar*).

‘Dead mountain flowers, dead mountain-meadow  
flowers,

Dearer than when you made your mountain gay,  
Sweeter than any violet of to-day,

Richer than all the wide world-wealth of May,  
To me, tho’ all your bloom has died away,  
You bloom again, dead mountain-meadow  
flowers.’

*Enter ELISABETTA with cloth*

ELISABETTA. A word with you, my lord !

COUNT (*singing*). ‘O mountain flowers !’

ELISABETTA. A word, my lord ! (*Louder*).

COUNT (*sings*). ‘Dead flowers !’

ELISABETTA. A word, my lord ! (*Louder*).

COUNT. I pray you pardon me again !

[*LADY GIOVANNA looking at wreath.*

COUNT (*to ELISABETTA*). What is it ?

ELISABETTA. My lord, we have but one piece  
of earthenware to serve the salad in to my lady,  
and that cracked !

COUNT. Why then, that flower’d bowl my  
ancestor

Fetch’d from the farthest east—we never use it  
For fear of breakage—but this day has brought  
A great occasion. You can take it, nurse !

ELISABETTA. I did take it, my lord, but what  
with my lady’s coming that had so flurried me,  
and what with the fear of breaking it, I did  
break it, my lord : it is broken !



## THE FALCON

COUNT. My one thing left of value in the world !

No matter ! see your cloth be white as snow !

ELISABETTA (*pointing thro' window*). White ?  
I warrant thee, my son, as the snow yonder on  
the very tip-top o' the mountain.

COUNT. And yet to speak white truth, my  
good old mother,  
I have seen it like the snow on the moraine.

ELISABETTA. How can your lordship say so ?

There my lord ! [*Lays cloth.*]

O my dear son, be not unkind to me.

And one word more. [*Going—returns.*]

COUNT (*touching guitar*). Good ! let it be but one.

ELISABETTA. Hath she return'd thy love ?

COUNT. Not yet !

ELISABETTA. And will she ?

COUNT (*looking at LADY GIOVANNA*). I scarce  
believe it !

ELISABETTA. Shame upon her then ! [*Exit.*]

COUNT (*sings*). 'Dead mountain flowers'——

Ah well, my nurse has broken  
The thread of my dead flowers, as she has broken  
My china bowl. My memory is as dead.

[*Goes and replaces guitar.*]

Strange that the words at home with me so long  
Should fly like bosom friends when needed most.  
So by your leave if you would hear the rest,  
The writing.

LADY GIOVANNA (*holding wreath toward him*).

There ! my lord, you are a poet,

## THE FALCON

And can you not imagine that the wreath,  
Set, as you say, so lightly on her head,  
Fell with her motion as she rose, and she,  
A girl, a child, then but fifteen, however  
Flutter'd or flatter'd by your notice of her,  
Was yet too bashful to return for it ?

COUNT. Was it so indeed ? was it so ? was it so ?

*[Leans forward to take wreath, and touches*

*LADY GIOVANNA'S hand, which she withdraws  
hastily ; he places wreath on corner of chair.*

LADY GIOVANNA (*with dignity*). I did not say,  
my lord, that it was so ;  
I said you might imagine it was so.

*Enter FILIPPO with bowl of salad, which he  
places on table*

FILIPPO. Here's a fine salad for my lady, for  
tho' we have been a soldier, and ridden by his  
lordship's side, and seen the red of the battle-  
field, yet are we now drill-sergeant to his lord-  
ship's lettuces, and profess to be great in green  
things and in garden-stuff.

LADY GIOVANNA. I thank thee, good Filippo.  
*[Exit FILIPPO.*

*Enter ELISABETTA with bird on a dish which she  
places on table*

ELISABETTA (*close to table*). Here's a fine  
fowl for my lady ; I had scant time to do him  
in. I hope he be not underdone, for we be un-  
done in the doing of him.

## THE FALCON

LADY GIOVANNA. I thank you, my good nurse.

FILIPPO (*re-entering with plate of prunes*). And here are fine fruits for my lady—prunes, my lady, from the tree that my lord himself planted here in the blossom of his boyhood—and so I, Filippo, being, with your ladyship's pardon, and as your ladyship knows, his lordship's own foster-brother, would commend them to your ladyship's most peculiar appreciation.

[*Puts plate on table.*]

ELISABETTA. Filippo !

LADY GIOVANNA (*COUNT leads her to table*). Will you not eat with me, my lord ?

COUNT. I cannot,  
Not a morsel, not one morsel. I have broken  
My fast already. I will pledge you. Wine !  
Filippo, wine !

[*Sits near table ; FILIPPO brings flask, fills the  
COUNT'S goblet, then LADY GIOVANNA'S ;  
ELISABETTA stands at the back of LADY  
GIOVANNA'S chair.*]

COUNT. It is but thin and cold,  
Not like the vintage blowing round your castle.  
We lie too deep down in the shadow here.  
Your ladyship lives higher in the sun.

[*They pledge each other and drink.*]

LADY GIOVANNA. If I might send you down  
a flask or two  
Of that same vintage ? There is iron in it.  
It has been much commended as a medicine.

## THE FALCON

I give it my sick son, and if you be  
Not quite recover'd of your wound, the wine  
Might help you. None has ever told me yet  
The story of your battle and your wound.

FILIPPO (*coming forward*). I can tell you, my lady, I can tell you.

ELISABETTA. Filippo! will you take the word out of your master's own mouth?

FILIPPO. Was it there to take? Put it there, my lord.

COUNT. Giovanna, my dear lady, in this same battle

We had been beaten—they were ten to one.  
The trumpets of the fight had echo'd down,  
I and Filippo here had done our best,  
And, having passed unwounded from the field,  
Were seated sadly at a fountain side,  
Our horses grazing by us, when a troop,  
Laden with booty and with a flag of ours  
Ta'en in the fight——

FILIPPO. Ay, but we fought for it back,  
And kill'd——

ELISABETTA. Filippo!

COUNT. A troop of horse——

FILIPPO. Five hundred!

COUNT. Say fifty!

FILIPPO. And we kill'd 'em by the score!

ELISABETTA. Filippo!

FILIPPO. Well, well, well! I bite my tongue.

COUNT. We may have left their fifty less  
by five.

## THE FALCON

However, staying not to count how many,  
But anger'd at their flaunting of our flag,  
We mounted, and we dash'd into the heart  
of 'em.

I wore the lady's chaplet round my neck ;  
It served me for a blessed rosary.  
I am sure that more than one brave fellow owed  
His death to the charm in it.

ELISABETTA. Hear that, my lady !

COUNT. I cannot tell how long we strove  
before

Our horses fell beneath us ; down we went  
Crush'd, hack'd at, trampled underfoot. The  
night,

As some cold-manner'd friend may strangely  
do us

The truest service, had a touch of frost  
That help'd to check the flowing of the blood.  
My last sight ere I swoon'd was one sweet  
face

Crown'd with the wreath. *That* seem'd to come  
and go.

They left us there for dead !

ELISABETTA. Hear that, my lady !

FILIPPO. Ay, and I left two fingers there for  
dead. See, my lady ! (*Showing his hand.*)

LADY GIOVANNA. I see, Filippo !

FILIPPO. And I have small hope of the  
gentleman gout in my great toe.

LADY GIOVANNA. And why, Filippo ?

[*Smiling absently.*]

## THE FALCON

FILIPPO. I left him there for dead too !

ELISABETTA. She smiles at him—how hard  
the woman is !

My lady, if your ladyship were not  
Too proud to look upon the garland, you  
Would find it stain'd——

COUNT (*rising*). Silence, Elisabetta !

ELISABETTA. Stain'd with the blood of the  
best heart that ever

Beat for one woman. [*Points to wreath on chair.*]

LADY GIOVANNA (*rising slowly*). I can eat no  
more !

COUNT. You have but trifled with our homely  
salad,

But dallied with a single lettuce-leaf ;  
Not eaten anything.

LADY GIOVANNA. Nay, nay, I cannot.  
You know, my lord, I told you I was troubled.  
My one child Florio lying still so sick,  
I bound myself, and by a solemn vow,  
That I would touch no flesh till he were well  
Here, or else well in Heaven, where all is well.

[*ELISABETTA clears table of bird and salad :  
FILIPPO snatches up the plate of prunes and  
holds them to LADY GIOVANNA.*]

FILIPPO. But the prunes, my lady, from the  
tree that his lordship——

LADY GIOVANNA. Not now, Filippo. My  
lord Federigo,  
Can I not speak with you once more alone ?

## THE FALCON

COUNT. You hear, Filippo? My good fellow,  
go!

FILIPPO. But the prunes that your lordship——

ELISABETTA. Filippo!

COUNT. Ay, prune our company of thine  
own and go!

ELISABETTA. Filippo!

FILIPPO (*turning*). Well, well! the women!  
[*Exit.*

COUNT. And thou too leave us, my dear  
nurse, alone.

ELISABETTA (*folding up cloth and going*). And  
me too! Ay, the dear nurse will leave you  
alone; but, for all that, she that has eaten the  
yolk is scarce like to swallow the shell.

[*Turns and curtsseys stiffly to LADY GIOVANNA,  
then exit. LADY GIOVANNA takes out diamond  
necklace from casket.*

LADY GIOVANNA. I have anger'd your good  
nurse; these old-world servants  
Are all but flesh and blood with those they  
serve.

My lord, I have a present to return you,  
And afterwards a boon to crave of you.

COUNT. No, my most honour'd and long-  
worshipt lady,  
Poor Federigo degli Alberighi  
Takes nothing in return from you except  
Return of his affection—can deny  
Nothing to you that you require of him.

## THE FALCON

LADY GIOVANNA. Then I require you to take  
back your diamonds—

[*Offering necklace.*]

I doubt not they are yours. No other heart  
Of such magnificence in courtesy  
Beats—out of heaven. They seem'd too rich a  
prize

To trust with any messenger. I came

In person to return them. [*Count draws back.*]

If the phrase

'Return' displease you, we will say—exchange  
them

For your—for your——

COUNT (*takes a step toward her and then back*).

For mine—and what of mine?

LADY GIOVANNA. Well, shall we say this  
wreath and your sweet rhymes?

COUNT. But have you ever worn my  
diamonds?

LADY GIOVANNA. No!

For that would seem accepting of your love.

I cannot brave my brother—but be sure

That I shall never marry again, my lord!

COUNT. Sure?

LADY GIOVANNA. Yes!

COUNT. Is this your brother's order?

LADY GIOVANNA. No!

For he would marry me to the richest man

In Florence; but I think you know the saying—

'Better a man without riches, than riches with-  
out a man.'



## THE FALCON

COUNT. A noble saying—and acted on would  
yield

A nobler breed of men and women. Lady,  
I find you a shrewd bargainer. The wreath  
That once you wore outvalues twentyfold  
The diamonds that you never deign'd to wear.  
But lay them there for a moment !

[*Points to table.* LADY GIOVANNA *places necklace on table.*

And be you  
Gracious enough to let me know the boon  
By granting which, if aught be mine to grant,  
I should be made more happy than I hoped  
Ever to be again.

LADY GIOVANNA. Then keep your wreath,  
But you will find me a shrewd bargainer still.  
I cannot keep your diamonds, for the gift  
I ask for, to *my* mind and at this present  
Outvalues all the jewels upon earth.

COUNT. It should be love that thus outvalues  
all.

You speak like love, and yet you love me not.  
I have nothing in this world but love for you.

LADY GIOVANNA. Love ? it *is* love, love for  
my dying boy,  
Moves me to ask it of you.

COUNT. What ? my time ?  
Is it my time ? Well, I can give my time  
To him that is a part of you, your son.  
Shall I return to the castle with you ? Shall I  
Sit by him, read to him, tell him my tales,

## THE FALCON

Sing him my songs? You know that I can  
touch

The ghittern to some purpose.

LADY GIOVANNA. No, not that!

I thank you heartily for that—and you,  
I doubt not from your nobleness of nature,  
Will pardon me for asking what I ask.

COUNT. Giovanna, dear Giovanna, I that once  
The wildest of the random youth of Florence  
Before I saw you—all my nobleness  
Of nature, as you deign to call it, draws  
From you, and from my constancy to you.  
No more, but speak.

LADY GIOVANNA. I will. You know sick  
people,  
More specially sick children, have strange fancies,  
Strange longings; and to thwart them in their  
mood  
May work them grievous harm at times, may  
even

Hasten their end. I would you had a son!  
It might be easier then for you to make  
Allowance for a mother—her—who comes  
To rob you of your one delight on earth.  
How often has my sick boy yearn'd for this!  
I have put him off as often; but to-day  
I dared not—so much weaker, so much worse  
For last day's journey. I was weeping for him;  
He gave me his hand: 'I should be well again  
If the good Count would give me——'

COUNT.

Give me.

## THE FALCON

LADY GIOVANNA. His falcon.

COUNT (*starts back*). My falcon !

LADY GIOVANNA. Yes, your falcon, Federigo !

COUNT. Alas, I cannot !

LADY GIOVANNA. Cannot ? Even so !  
I fear'd as much. O this unhappy world !  
How shall I break it to him ? how shall I tell  
him ?

The boy may die : more blessed were the rags  
Of some pale beggar-woman seeking alms  
For her sick son, if he were like to live,  
Than all my childless wealth, if mine must die.  
I was to blame—the love you said you bore me—  
My lord, we thank you for your entertainment.

[*With a stately curisey.*

And so return—Heaven help him !—to our son.

[*Turns.*

COUNT (*rushes forward*). Stay, stay, I am most  
unlucky, most unhappy.

You never had look'd in on me before,  
And when you came and dipt your sovereign  
head

Thro' these low doors, you ask'd to eat with  
me.

I had but emptiness to set before you,  
No not a draught of milk, no not an egg,  
Nothing but my brave bird, my noble falcon,  
My comrade of the house, and of the field.  
She had to die for it—she died for you.  
Perhaps I thought with those of old, the nobler  
The victim was, the more acceptable

## THE FALCON

Might be the sacrifice. I fear you scarce  
Will thank me for your entertainment now.

LADY GIOVANNA (*returning*). I bear with him  
no longer.

COUNT. No, Madonna !  
And he will have to bear with it as he may.

LADY GIOVANNA. I break with him for ever !

COUNT. Yes, Giovanna,  
But he will keep his love to you for ever !

LADY GIOVANNA. You? you? not you ! My  
brother ! my hard brother !  
O Federigo, Federigo, I love you !  
Spite of ten thousand brothers, Federigo.

[*Falls at his feet.*

COUNT (*impetuously*). Why then the dying of  
my noble bird  
Hath served me better than her living—then  
[*Takes diamonds from table.*  
These diamonds are both yours and mine—have  
won

Their value again—beyond all markets—there  
I lay them for the first time round your neck.  
[*Lays necklace round her neck.*

And then this chaplet—No more feuds, but peace,  
Peace and conciliation ! I will make  
Your brother love me. See, I tear away  
The leaves were darken'd by the battle—  
[*Pulls leaves off and throws them down.*

—crown you  
Again with the same crown my Queen of Beauty.  
[*Places wreath on her head.*

## THE FALCON

Rise—I could almost think that the dead garland  
Will break once more into the living blossom.  
Nay, nay, I pray you rise.

*[Raises her with both hands.]*

We two together  
Will help to heal your son—your son and mine—  
We shall do it—we shall do it. *[Embraces her.]*  
The purpose of my being is accomplish'd,  
And I am happy !

LADY GIOVANNA. And I too, Federigo.

# THE PROMISE OF MAY

‘A surface man of theories, true to none.’

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

FARMER DOBSON.

MR. PHILIP EDGAR (*afterwards* Mr. HAROLD).

FARMER STEER (*DORA and EVA's Father*).

MR. WILSON (*a Schoolmaster*).

HIGGINS

JAMES

DAN SMITH

JACKSON

ALLEN

DORA STEER.

EVA STEER.

SALLY ALLEN

MILLY

} *Farm Labourers.*

} *Farm Servants.*

*Farm Servants, Labourers, etc.*





# THE PROMISE OF MAY

## ACT I

### SCENE.—BEFORE FARMHOUSE

FARMING MEN *and* WOMEN. FARMING MEN *carry-  
ing forms, etc.*, WOMEN *carrying baskets of knives  
and forks, etc.*

1ST FARMING MAN. Be thou a-gawin' to the long barn ?

2ND FARMING MAN. Ay, to be sewer ! Be thou ?

1ST FARMING MAN. Why, o' coorse, fur it be the owd man's birthdaäy. He be heighty this very daäy, and 'e telled all on us to be i' the long barn by one o'clock, fur he'll gie us a big dinner, and haäfe th' parish 'll be theer, an' Miss Dora, an' Miss Eva, an' all !

2ND FARMING MAN. Miss Dora be coomed back, then ?

1ST FARMING MAN. Ay, haäfe an hour ago. She be in theer now. (*Pointing to house.*) Owd

# THE PROMISE OF MAY

ACT I

Steer wur afeärd she wouldn't be back i' time to keep his birthdaäy, and he wur in a tew about it all the murnin' ; and he sent me wi' the gig to Littlechester to fetch 'er ; and 'er an' the owd man they fell a kissin' o' one another like two sweet'arts i' the poorch as soon as he clapt eyes of 'er.

2ND FARMING MAN. Foälks says he likes Miss Eva the best.

1ST FARMING MAN. Naäy, I knaws nowt o' what foälks says, an' I caäres nowt neither. Foälks doesn't hallus knaw thessens ; but sewer I be, they be two o' the purtiest gels ye can see of a summer murnin'.

2ND FARMING MAN. Beänt Miss Eva gone off a bit of 'er good looks o' laäte ?

1ST FARMING MAN. Noä, not a bit.

2ND FARMING MAN. Why coöm awaäy, then, to the long barn. [*Exeunt.*

DORA *looks out of window.* Enter DOBSON.

DORA (*singing*).

The town lay still in the low sun-light,  
The hen cluckt late by the white farm gate,  
The maid to her dairy came in from the cow,  
The stock-dove coo'd at the fall of night,  
The blossom had open'd on every bough ;  
O joy for the promise of May, of May,  
O joy for the promise of May.

(*Nodding at DOBSON.*) I'm coming down, Mr. Dobson. I haven't seen Eva yet. Is she anywhere in the garden?

DOBSON. Noä, Miss. I ha'n't seed 'er neither.

DORA (*enters singing*).

But a red fire woke in the heart of the town,  
And a fox from the glen ran away with the hen,  
And a cat to the cream, and a rat to the cheese;  
And the stock-dove coo'd, till a kite dropt down,  
And a salt wind burnt the blossoming trees;

O grief for the promise of May, of May,

O grief for the promise of May.

I don't know why I sing that song; I don't love it.

DOBSON. Blessings on your pretty voice, Miss Dora. Wheer did they larn ye that?

DORA. In Cumberland, Mr. Dobson.

DOBSON. An' how did ye leäve the owd uncle i' Coomberland?

DORA. Getting better, Mr. Dobson. But he'll never be the same man again.

DOBSON. An' how d'ye find the owd man 'ere?

DORA. As well as ever. I came back to keep his birthday.

DOBSON. Well, I be coomed to keep his birthdaäy an' all. The owd man be heighty to-daäy, beänt he?

DORA. Yes, Mr. Dobson. And the day's bright like a friend, but the wind east like an

# THE PROMISE OF MAY

ACT I

enemy. Help me to move this bench for him into the sun. (*They move bench.*) No, not that way—here, under the apple tree. Thank you. Look how full of rosy blossom it is.

[*Pointing to apple tree.*]

DOBSON. Theer be redder blossoms nor them, Miss Dora.

DORA. Where do they blow, Mr. Dobson?

DOBSON. Under your eyes, Miss Dora.

DORA. Do they?

DOBSON. And your eyes be as blue as——

DORA. What, Mr. Dobson? A butcher's frock?

DOBSON. Noä, Miss Dora; as blue as——

DORA. Bluebell, harebell, speedwell, blue-bottle, succory, forget-me-not?

DOBSON. Noä, Miss Dora; as blue as——

DORA. The sky? or the sea on a blue day?

DOBSON. Naäy then. I meän'd they be as blue as violets.

DORA. Are they?

DOBSON. Theer ye goäs ageän, Miss, niver believing owt I says to ye—hallus a-fobbing ma off, tho' ye knaws I love ye. I warrants ye'll think moor o' this young Squire Edgar as ha' coomed among us—the Lord knaws how—ye'll think more on 'is little finger than hall my hand at the haltar.

DORA. Perhaps, Master Dobson. I can't tell, for I have never seen him. But my sister

wrote that he was mighty pleasant, and had no pride in him.

DOBSON. He'll be arter you now, Miss Dora.

DORA. Will he? How can I tell?

DOBSON. He's been arter Miss Eva, haän't he?

DORA. Not that I know.

DOBSON. Didn't I spy 'em a-sitting i' the woodbine harbour together?

DORA. What of that? Eva told me that he was taking her likeness. He's an artist.

DOBSON. What's a hartist? I doänt believe he's iver a 'eart under his waistcoat. And I tells ye what, Miss Dora: he's no respect for the Queen, or the parson, or the justice o' peace, or owt. I ha' heärd 'im a-gawin' on 'ud make your 'air—God bless it!—stan' on end. And wuss nor that. When theer wur a meeting o' farmers at Littlechester t'other daäy, and they was all a-crying out at the bad times, he cooms up, and he calls out among our oän men, 'The land belongs to the people!'

DORA. And what did *you* say to that?

DOBSON. Well, I says, s'pose my pig's the land, and you says it belongs to the parish, and theer be a thousand i' the parish, taäkin' in the women and childer; and s'pose I kills my pig, and gi'es it among 'em, why there wudn't be a dinner for nawbody, and I should ha' lost the pig.

DORA. And what did he say to that?

# THE PROMISE OF MAY

ACT I

DOBSON. Nowt—what could he saäy? But I taäkes 'im fur a bad lot and a burn fool, and I haätes the very sight on him.

DORA (*looking at DOBSON*). Master Dobson, you are a comely man to look at.

DOBSON. I thank you for that, Miss Dora, onyhow.

DORA. Ay, but you turn right ugly when you're in an ill temper; and I promise you that if you forget yourself in your behaviour to this gentleman, my father's friend, I will never change word with you again.

*Enter FARMING MAN from barn*

FARMING MAN. Miss, the farming men 'ull hev their dinner i' the long barn, and the master 'ud be straänge an' pleased if you'd step in fust, and see that all be right and reg'lar fur 'em afoor he coöm.

[*Exit.*

DORA. I go. Master Dobson, did you hear what I said?

DOBSON. Yeas, yeas! I'll not meddle wi' 'im if he doänt meddle wi' meä. (*Exit DORA.*) Coomly, says she. I niver thowt o' mysen i' that waäy; but if she'd taäke to ma i' that waäy, or ony waäy, I'd slaäve out my life fur 'er. 'Coomly to look at,' says she—but she said it spiteful-like. To look at—yeas, 'coomly'; and she mayn't be so fur out theer. But if that be nowt to she, then it be nowt to me. (*Looking*

*off stage.*) Schoolmaster! Why if Steer han't haxed schoolmaster to dinner, thaw 'e knaws I was hallus ageän heving schoolmaster i' the parish! fur him as be handy wi' a book bean't but haäfe a hand at a pitchfork.

*Enter WILSON*

Well, Wilson. I seed that one cow o' thine i' the pinfold ageän as I wur a-coomin' 'ere.

WILSON. Very likely, Mr. Dobson. She *will* break fence. I can't keep her in order.

DOBSON. An' if tha can't keep thy one cow i' horder, how can tha keep all thy scholars i' horder? But let that goä by. What dost a know o' this Mr. Hedgar as be a-lodgin' wi' ye? I coom'd upon 'im t'other daäy lookin' at the coontry, then a-scrattin upon a bit o' pääper, then a-lookin' agean; and I taäked 'im fur soom sort of a land-surveyor—but a beänt.

WILSON. He's a Somersetshire man, and a very civil-spoken gentleman.

DOBSON. Gentleman! What be he a-doing here ten mile an' moor fro' a raäil? We laäys out o' the waäy fur gentlefoälk altogither—leästwaäys they niver cooms 'ere but fur the trout i' our beck, fur they be know'd as far as Littlechester. But 'e doänt fish neither.

WILSON. Well, it's no sin in a gentleman not to fish.

DOBSON. Noä, but I haätes 'im.



WILSON. Better step out of his road, then, for he's walking to us, and with a book in his hand.

DOBSON. An' I haätes booöks an' all, fur they puts foälk off the owd waäys.

*Enter* EDGAR, *reading—not seeing* DOBSON and  
WILSON

EDGAR. This author, with his charm of  
simple style  
And close dialectic, all but proving man  
An automatic series of sensations,  
Has often numb'd me into apathy  
Against the unpleasant jolts of this rough road  
That breaks off short into the abysses—made me  
A Quietist taking all things easily.

DOBSON. (*Aside.*) There mun be summut  
wrong theer, Wilson, fur I doänt understan' it.

WILSON. (*Aside.*) Nor I either, Mr. Dobson.

DOBSON (*scornfully*). An' thou doänt under-  
stan' it neither—and thou schoolmaster an' all.

EDGAR. What can a man, then, live for but  
sensations,  
Pleasant ones? men of old would undergo  
Unpleasant for the sake of pleasant ones  
Hereafter, like the Moslem beauties waiting  
To clasp their lovers by the golden gates.  
For me, whose cheerless Houris after death  
Are Night and Silence, pleasant ones—the while—  
If possible, here! to crop the flower and pass.

DOBSON. Well, I never 'eärd the likes o' that afoor.

WILSON. (*Aside.*) But I have, Mr. Dobson. It's the old Scripture text, 'Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die.' I'm sorry for it, for, tho' he never comes to church, I thought better of him.

EDGAR. 'What are we,' says the blind old man in Lear?

'As flies to the Gods; they kill us for their sport.'

DOBSON. (*Aside.*) Then the owd man i' Lear should be shaämed of hissen, but noän o' the parishes goäs by that naäme 'ereabouts.

EDGAR. The Gods! but they, the shadows of ourselves,

Have past for ever. It is Nature kills,  
And not for *her* sport either. She knows nothing.  
Man only knows, the worse for him! for why  
Cannot *he* take his pastime like the flies?  
And if my pleasure breed another's pain,  
Well—is not that the course of Nature too,  
From the dim dawn of Being—her main law  
Whereby she grows in beauty—that her flies  
Must massacre each other? this poor Nature!

DOBSON. Natur! Natur! Well, it be i' *my* natur to knock 'im o' the 'eäd now; but I weänt.

EDGAR. A Quietist taking all things easily—  
why—

Have I been dipping into this again

# THE PROMISE OF MAY

ACT I

To steel myself against the leaving her ?

[Closes book, seeing WILSON.

Good day !

WILSON. Good day, sir.

[DOBSON looks hard at EDGAR.

EDGAR (to DOBSON). Have I the pleasure, friend, of knowing you ?

DOBSON. Dobson.

EDGAR. Good day, then, Dobson. [Exit.

DOBSON. 'Good daäy then, Dobson !' Civil-spoken i'deed ! Why, Wilson, tha 'eärd 'im thysen—the feller couldn't find a Mister in his mouth fur me, as farms five hoonderd haäcre.

WILSON. You never find one for me, Mr. Dobson.

DOBSON. Noä, fur thou be nobbut school-master ; but I taäkes 'im for a Lunnun swindler, and a burn fool.

WILSON. He can hardly be both, and he pays me regular every Saturday.

DOBSON. Yeas ; but I haätes 'im.

*Enter STEER, FARM MEN and WOMEN*

STEER (*goes and sits under apple tree*). Hev' ony o' ye seen Eva ?

DOBSON. Noä, Mr. Steer.

STEER. Well, I reckons they'll hev' a fine cider-crop to-year if the blossom 'owds. Good murnin', neighbours, and the saäme to you, my men. I taäkes it kindly of all o' you that you be

coomed—what's the newspaäper word, Wilson?—celebrate—to celebrate my birthdaäy i' this fashion. Niver man 'ed better friends, and I will saäy niver master 'ed better men: fur thaw I may ha' fallen out wi' ye sometimes, the fault, mebbe, wur as much mine as yours; and, thaw I says it mysen, niver men 'ed a better master—and I knaws what men be, and what masters be, fur I wur nobbut a laäbourer, and now I be a landlord—burn a plowman, and now, as far as money goäs, I be a gentleman, thaw I beänt naw scholard, fur I 'ednt naw time to maäke mysen a scholard while I wur maäkin' mysen a gentleman, but I ha' taäen good care to turn out boäth my darters right down fine laädies.

DOBSON. An' soä they be.

1ST FARMING MAN. Soä they be! soä they be!

2ND FARMING MAN. The Lord bless boath on 'em!

3RD FARMING MAN. An' the saäme to you, Master.

4TH FARMING MAN. And long life to boath on 'em. An' the saäme to you, Master Steer, likewise.

STEER. Thank ye!

*Enter EVA*

Wheer 'asta been?

EVA (*timidly*). Many happy returns of the day, father.

STEER. They can't be many, my dear, but I 'oäpes they'll be 'appy.

DOBSON. Why, tha looks haäle anew to last to a hoonderd.

STEER. An' why shouldn't I last to a hoonderd? Haäle! why shouldn't I be haäle? fur thaw I be heighty this very daäy, I niver 'es sa much as one pin's prick of paäin; an' I can taäke my glass along wi' the youngest, fur I niver touched a drop of owt till my oän wedding-daäy, an' then I wur turned huppads o' sixty. Why shouldn't I be haäle? I ha' plowed the ten-aäcre—it be mine now—afoor ony o' ye wur burn—ye all knaws the ten-aäcre—I mun ha' plowed it moor nor a hoonderd times; hallus hup at sunrise, and I'd drive the plow straäit as a line right i' the faäce o' the sun, then back ageän, a-follering my oän shadder—then hup ageän i' the faäce o' the sun. Eh! how the sun 'ud shine, and the larks 'ud sing i' them daäys, and the smell o' the mou'd an' all. Eh! if I could ha' gone on wi' the plowin' nobbut the smell o' the mou'd 'ud ha' maäde ma live as long as Jerusalem.

EVA. Methuselah, father.

STEER. Ay, lass, but when thou be as owd as me thou'll put one word fur another as I does.

DOBSON. But, Steer, thaw thou be haäle anew I seed tha a-limpin' up just now wi' the roomatics i' the knee.

STEER. Roomatics! Noä; I laäme't my knee

last night running arter a thief. Beänt there house-breäkers down i' Littlechester, Dobson—doänt ye hear of ony ?

DOBSON. Ay, that there be. Immanuel Goldsmiths was broke into o' Monday night, and ower a hoonderd pounds worth o' rings stolen.

STEER. So I thowt, and I heärd the winder—that's the winder at the end o' the passage, that goäs by thy chaumber. (*Turning to EVA.*) Why, lass, what maäkes tha sa red ? Did 'e git into thy chaumber ?

EVA. Father !

STEER. Well, I runned arter thief i' the dark, and fell ageän coalscuttle and my kneeä gev waäy or I'd ha' cotched 'im, but afoor I coomed up he got thruff the winder ageän.

EVA. Got thro' the window again ?

STEER. Ay, but he left the mark of 'is foot i' the flower-bed ; now theer be noän o' my men, thinks I to mysen, 'ud ha' done it 'cep' it were Dan Smith, fur I cotched 'im once a-steälin' coäls an' I sent fur 'im, an' I measured his foot wi' the mark i' the bed, but it wouldn't fit—seeäms to me the mark wur maäde by a Lunnun boot. (*Looks at EVA.*) Why, now, what maäkes tha sa white ?

EVA. Fright, father !

STEER. Maäke thysen eäsy. I'll hev the winder naäiled up, and put Towser under it.

EVA (*clasping her hands*). No, no, father ! Towser'll tear him all to pieces.

# THE PROMISE OF MAY

ACT I

STEER. Let him keep awaäy, then ; but coom, coom ! let's be gawin. They ha' broached a barrel of aäle i' the long barn, and the fiddler be theer, and the lads and lasses 'ull hev a dance.

EVA. (*Aside.*) Dance ! small heart have I to dance. I should seem to be dancing upon a grave.

STEER. Wheer be Mr. Edgar ? about the premises ?

DOBSON. Hallus about the premises !

STEER. So much the better, so much the better. I likes 'im, and Eva likes 'im. Eva can do owt wi' 'im ; look for 'im, Eva, and bring 'im to the barn. He 'ant naw pride in 'im, and we'll git 'im to speechify for us arter dinner.

EVA. Yes, father !

[*Exit.*]

STEER. Coom along then, all the rest o' ye ! Churchwarden be a coomin, thaw me and 'im we niver 'grees about the tithe ; and Parson mebbe, thaw he niver mended that gap i' the glebe fence as I telled 'im ; and Blacksmith, thaw he niver shoes a herse to my likings ; and Baäker, thaw I sticks to hoäm-maäde—but all on 'em welcome, all on 'em welcome ; and I've hed the long barn cleared out of all the machines, and the sacks, and the taäters, and the mangles, and theer'll be room anew for all o' ye. Foller me.

ALL. Yeas, yeas ! Three cheers for Mr. Steer !

[*All exeunt except DOBSON into barn.*]

*Enter* EDGAR

DOBSON (*who is going, turns*). Squire!—if so be you be a squire.

EDGAR. Dobbins, I think.

DOBSON. Dobbins, you thinks ; and I thinks ye weärs a Lunnun boot.

EDGAR. Well ?

DOBSON. And I thinks I'd like to taäke the measure o' your foot.

EDGAR. Ay, if you'd like to measure your own length upon the grass.

DOBSON. Coom, coom, that's a good un. Why, I could throw four o' ye ; but I promised one of the Misses I wouldn't meddle wi' ye, and I weänt. [*Exit into barn.*]

EDGAR. Jealous of me with Eva ! Is it so ? Well, tho' I grudge the pretty jewel, that I Have worn, to such a clod, yet that might be The best way out of it, if the child could keep Her counsel. I am sure I wish her happy. But I must free myself from this entanglement. I have all my life before me—so has she— Give her a month or two, and her affections Will flower toward the light in some new face. Still I am half-afraid to meet her now. She will urge marriage on me. I hate tears. Marriage is but an old tradition. I hate Traditions, ever since my narrow father, After my frolic with his tenant's girl,



## THE PROMISE OF MAY

ACT I

Made younger elder son, violated the whole  
Tradition of our land, and left his heir,  
Born, happily, with some sense of art, to live  
By brush and pencil. By and by, when Thought  
Comes down among the crowd, and man per-  
ceives that

The lost gleam of an after-life but leaves him  
A beast of prey in the dark, why then the crowd  
May wreak my wrongs upon my wrongers.

Marriage !

That fine, fat, hook-nosed uncle of mine, old  
Harold,

Who leaves me all his land at Littlechester,  
He, too, would oust me from his will, if I  
Made such a marriage. And marriage in itself—  
The storm is hard at hand will sweep away  
Thrones, churches, ranks, traditions, customs,  
marriage

One of the feeblest ! Then the man, the woman,  
Following their best affinities, will each  
Bid their old bond farewell with smiles, not  
tears ;

Good wishes, not reproaches ; with no fear  
Of the world's gossiping clamour, and no need  
Of veiling their desires.

Conventionalism,

Who shrieks by day at what she does by night,  
Would call this vice ; but one time's vice may  
be

The virtue of another ; and Vice and Virtue  
Are but two masks of self ; and what hereafter

Shall mark out Vice from Virtue in the gulf  
Of never-dawning darkness ?

*Enter EVA*

My sweet Eva,  
Where have you lain in ambush all the morning ?  
They say your sister, Dora, has return'd,  
And that should make you happy, if you love  
her !

But you look troubled.

EVA. Oh, I love her so,  
I was afraid of her, and I hid myself.  
We never kept a secret from each other ;  
She would have seen at once into my trouble,  
And ask'd me what I could not answer. Oh,  
Philip,  
Father heard you last night. Our savage mastiff,  
That all but kill'd the beggar, will be placed  
Beneath the window, Philip.

EDGAR. Savage, is he ?  
What matters ? Come, give me your hand and  
kiss me  
This beautiful May-morning.

EVA. The most beautiful  
May we have had for many years !

EDGAR. And here  
Is the most beautiful morning of this May.  
Nay, you must smile upon me ! There—you  
make  
The May and morning still more beautiful,  
You, the most beautiful blossom of the May.

# THE PROMISE OF MAY

ACT I

EVA. Dear Philip, all the world is beautiful  
If we were happy, and could chime in with it.

EDGAR. True ; for the senses, love, are for  
the world ;  
That for the senses.

EVA. Yes.

EDGAR. And when the man,  
The child of evolution, flings aside  
His swaddling-bands, the morals of the tribe,  
He, following his own instincts as his God,  
Will enter on the larger golden age ;  
No pleasure then taboo'd : for when the tide  
Of full democracy has overwhelm'd  
This Old world, from that flood will rise the  
New,  
Like the Love-goddess, with no bridal veil,  
Ring, trinket of the Church, but naked Nature  
In all her loveliness.

EVA. What are you saying ?

EDGAR. That, if we did not strain to make  
ourselves  
Better and higher than Nature, we might be  
As happy as the bees there at their honey  
In these sweet blossoms.

EVA. Yes ; how sweet they smell !

EDGAR. There ! let me break some off for  
you. [*Breaking branch off.*

EVA. My thanks.

But, look, how wasteful of the blossom you are !  
One, two, three, four, five, six—you have robb'd  
poor father

Of ten good apples. Oh, I forgot to tell you  
He wishes you to dine along with us,  
And speak for him after—you that are so  
clever!

EDGAR. I grieve I cannot ; but, indeed——

EVA. What is it ?

EDGAR. Well, business. I must leave you,  
love, to-day.

EVA. Leave me, to-day ! And when will  
you return ?

EDGAR. I cannot tell precisely ; but——

EVA. But what ?

EDGAR. I trust, my dear, we shall be always  
friends.

EVA. After all that has gone between us—  
friends !

What, only friends ? [Drops branch.

EDGAR. All that has gone between us  
Should surely make us friends.

EVA. But keep us lovers.

EDGAR. Child, do you love me now ?

EVA. Yes, now and ever.

EDGAR. Then you should wish us both to  
love for ever.

But, if you *will* bind love to one for ever,  
Altho' at first he take his bonds for flowers,  
As years go on, he feels them press upon him,  
Begins to flutter in them, and at last  
Breaks thro' them, and so flies away for ever ;  
While, had you left him free use of his wings,  
Who knows that he had ever dream'd of flying ?

# THE PROMISE OF MAY

ACT I

EVA. But all that sounds so wicked and so strange ;  
 ‘Till death us part’—those are the only words,  
 The true ones—nay, and those not true enough,  
 For they that love do not believe that death  
 Will part them. Why do you jest with me, and try  
 To fright me? Tho’ you are a gentleman,  
 I but a farmer’s daughter——

EDGAR. Tut ! you talk  
 Old feudalism. When the great Democracy  
 Makes a new world——

EVA. And if you be not jesting,  
 Neither the old world, nor the new, nor father,  
 Sister, nor you, shall ever see me more.

EDGAR (*moved*). Then—(*aside*) Shall I say  
 it?—(*aloud*) fly with me to-day.

EVA. No ! Philip, Philip, if you do not  
 marry me,  
 I shall go mad for utter shame and die.

EDGAR. Then, if we needs must be conven-  
 tional,  
 When shall your parish-parson bawl our banns  
 Before your gaping clowns ?

EVA. Not in our church—  
 I think I scarce could hold my head up there.  
 Is there no other way ?

EDGAR. Yes, if you cared  
 To fee an over-opulent superstition,  
 Then they would grant you what they call a licence  
 To marry. Do you wish it ?

EVA. *Do I wish it ?*

EDGAR. In London.

EVA. You will write to me ?

EDGAR. I will.

EVA. And I will fly to you thro' the night,  
the storm—

Yes, tho' the fire should run along the ground,  
As once it did in Egypt. Oh, you see,  
I was just out of school, I had no mother—  
My sister far away—and you, a gentleman,  
Told me to trust you : yes, in everything—  
*That was the only true love ; and I trusted—*  
Oh, yes, indeed, I would have died for you.  
How could you—Oh, how could you ?—nay,  
how could I ?

But now you will set all right again, and I  
Shall not be made the laughter of the village,  
And poor old father not die miserable.

DORA (*singing in the distance*).

O joy for the promise of May, of May,  
O joy for the promise of May.

EDGAR. Speak not so loudly ; that must be  
your sister.

You never told her, then, of what has past  
Between us.

EVA. Never !

EDGAR. Do not till I bid you.

EVA. No, Philip, no. [*Turns away.*]

EDGAR (*moved*). How gracefully there she  
stands

Weeping—the little Niobe ! What ! we prize

# THE PROMISE OF MAY

ACT I

The statue or the picture all the more  
When we have made them ours ! Is she less  
loveable,

Less lovely, being wholly mine ? To stay—  
Follow my art among these quiet fields,  
Live with these honest folk——

And play the fool !

No ! she that gave herself to me so easily  
Will yield herself as easily to another.

EVA. Did you speak, Philip ?

EDGAR. Nothing more, farewell.

[*They embrace.*]

DORA (*coming nearer*).

O grief for the promise of May, of May,  
O grief for the promise of May.

EDGAR (*still embracing her*). Keep up your  
heart until we meet again.

EVA. If that should break before we meet  
again ?

EDGAR. Break ! nay, but call for Philip  
when you will,

And he returns.

EVA. Heaven hears you, Philip Edgar !

EDGAR (*moved*). And *he* would hear you  
even from the grave.

Heaven curse him if he come not at your call !

[*Exit.*]

*Enter DORA*

DORA. Well, Eva !

EVA. Oh, Dora, Dora, how long you have been away from home ! Oh, how often I have wished for you ! It seemed to me that we were parted for ever.

DORA. For ever, you foolish child ! What's come over you ? We parted like the brook yonder about the alder island, to come together again in a moment and to go on together again, till one of us be married. But where is this Mr. Edgar whom you praised so in your first letters ? You haven't even mentioned him in your last ?

EVA. He has gone to London.

DORA. Ay, child ; and you look thin and pale. Is it for his absence ? Have you fancied yourself in love with him ? That's all nonsense, you know, such a baby as you are. But you shall tell me all about it.

EVA. Not now—presently. Yes, I have been in trouble, but I am happy—I think, quite happy now.

DORA (*taking EVA's hand*). Come, then, and make them happy in the long barn, for father is in his glory, and there is a piece of beef like a house-side, and a plum-pudding as big as the round haystack. But see they are coming out for the dance already. Well, my child, let us join them.

*Enter all from barn laughing. EVA sits reluctantly under apple tree. STEER enters smoking, sits by EVA.*

*Dance*



## ACT II

*Five years have elapsed between Acts I. and II.*

SCENE.—A MEADOW. ON ONE SIDE A PATHWAY GOING OVER A RUSTIC BRIDGE. AT BACK THE FARMHOUSE AMONG TREES. IN THE DISTANCE A CHURCH SPIRE.

DOBSON *and* DORA

DOBSON. So the owd uncle i' Coomberland be deäd, Miss Dora, beänt he ?

DORA. Yes, Mr. Dobson, I've been attending on his deathbed and his burial.

DOBSON. It be five year sin' ye went afoor to him, and it seems to me nobbut t'other day. Hesn't he left ye nowt ?

DORA. No, Mr. Dobson.

DOBSON. But he were mighty fond o' ye, warn't he ?

DORA. Fonder of poor Eva—like everybody else.

DOBSON (*handing DORA basket of roses*). Not like me, Miss Dora ; and I ha' browt these roses to ye—I forgits what they calls 'em, but I hallus

gi'ed soom on 'em to Miss Eva at this time o' year. Will ya taäke 'em? fur Miss Eva, she set the bush by my dairy winder afoor she went to school at Littlechester—so I allus browt soom on 'em to her; and now she be gone, will ye taäke 'em, Miss Dora?

DORA. I thank you. They tell me that yesterday you mentioned her name too suddenly before my father. See that you do not do so again!

DOBSON. Noä; I knaws a deäl better now. I seed how the owd man wur vext.

DORA. I take them, then, for Eva's sake.

*[Takes basket, places some in her dress.]*

DOBSON. Eva's saäke. Yeas. Poor gel, poor gel! I can't abeär to think on 'er now, fur I'd ha' done owt fur 'er mysen; an' ony o' Steer's men, an' ony o' my men 'ud ha' done owt fur 'er, an' all the parish 'ud ha' done owt fur 'er, fur we was all on us proud on 'er, an' them theer be soom of her oän roses, an' she wur as sweet as ony on 'em—the Lord bless 'er—'er oän sen; an' weänt ye taäke 'em now, Miss Dora, fur 'er saäke an' fur my saäke an' all?

DORA. Do you want them back again?

DOBSON. Noä, noä! Keep 'em. But I hed a word to säy to ye.

DORA. Why, Farmer, you should be in the hayfield looking after your men; you couldn't have more splendid weather.

DOBSON. I be a going theer; but I thowt I'd

bring tha them roses fust. The weather's well anew, but the glass be a bit shaäky. S'iver we've led moäst on it.

DORA. Ay! but you must not be too sudden with it either, as you were last year, when you put it in green, and your stack caught fire.

DOBSON. I were insured, Miss, an' I lost nowt by it. But I weänt be too sudden wi' it; and I feel sewer, Miss Dora, that I ha' been noän too sudden wi' you, fur I ha' sarv'd for ye well nigh as long as the man sarved for 'is sweet'art i' Scriptur'. Weänt ye gi'e me a kind answer at last?

DORA. I have no thought of marriage, my friend. We have been in such grief these five years, not only on my sister's account, but the ill success of the farm, and the debts, and my father's breaking down, and his blindness. How could I think of leaving him?

DOBSON. Eh, but I be well to do; and if ye would nobbut hev me, I would taäke the owd blind man to my oän fireside. You should hev him allus wi' ye.

DORA. You are generous, but it cannot be. I cannot love you; nay, I think I never can be brought to love any man. It seems to me that I hate men, ever since my sister left us. Oh, see here. (*Pulls out a letter.*) I wear it next my heart. Poor sister, I had it five years ago. 'Dearest Dora,—I have lost myself, and am lost for ever to you and my poor father. I

thought Mr. Edgar the best of men, and he has proved himself the worst. Seek not for me, or you may find me at the bottom of the river.—  
EVA.'

DOBSON. Be that my fault ?

DORA. No ; but how should I, with this grief still at my heart, take to the milking of your cows, the fattening of your calves, the making of your butter, and the managing of your poultry ?

DOBSON. Naäy, but I hev an owd woman as 'ud see to all that ; and you should sit i' your oän parlour quite like a laädy, ye should !

DORA. It cannot be.

DOBSON. And plaäy the pianner, if ye liked, all daäy long, like a laädy, ye should an' all.

DORA. It cannot be.

DOBSON. And I would loove tha moor nor ony gentleman 'ud loove tha.

DORA. No, no ; it cannot be.

DOBSON. And p'raps ye hears 'at I soomtimes taäkes a drop too much ; but that be all along o' you, Miss, because ye weänt hev me ; but, if ye would, I could put all that o' one side eäsy anew.

DORA. Cannot you understand plain words, Mr. Dobson ? I tell you, it cannot be.

DOBSON. Eh, lass ! Thy feyther eddicated his darters to marry gentlefoälk, and see what's coomed on it.

DORA. That is enough, Farmer Dobson. You have shown me that, though fortune had born *you* into the estate of a gentleman, you

would still have been Farmer Dobson. You had better attend to your hayfield. Good afternoon.

[*Exit.*

DOBSON. 'Farmer Dobson!' Well, I be Farmer Dobson; but I thinks Farmer Dobson's dog 'ud ha' knaw'd better nor to cast her sister's misfortin inter 'er teeth arter she'd been a-reädin' me the letter wi' 'er voice a-shaäkin', and the drop in 'er eye. Theer she goäs! Shall I foller 'er and ax 'er to maäke it up? Noä, not yet. Let 'er cool upon it; I likes 'er all the better fur taäkin' me down, like a läädy, as she be. Farmer Dobson! I be Farmer Dobson, sewer anew; but if iver I cooms upo' Gentleman Hedgar ageän, and doänt lääy my cartwhip athurt 'is shou'ders, why then I beänt Farmer Dobson, but summun else—blaäme't if I beänt!

*Enter HAYMAKERS with a load of hay*

The last on it, eh?

1ST HAYMAKER. Yeas.

DOBSON. Hoäm wi' it, then. [*Exit surlyly.*

1ST HAYMAKER. Well, it be the last löä hoäm.

2ND HAYMAKER. Yeas, an' owd Dobson should be glad on it. What maäkes 'im allus sa glum?

SALLY ALLEN. Glum! he be wuss nor glum. He coom'd up to me yisterdaäy i' the haäyfield, when meä and my sweet'art was a workin' along

o' one side wi' one another, and he sent 'im awaäy to t'other end o' the field; and when I axed 'im why, he telled me 'at sweet'arts niver worked well together; and I telled 'im 'at sweet'arts allus worked best together; and then he called me a rude naäme, and I can't abide 'im.

JAMES. Why, lass, doänt tha knaw he be sweet upo' Dora Steer, and she weänt sa much as look at 'im? And wheniver 'e sees two sweet'arts together like thou and me, Sally, he be fit to bust hissen wi' spites and jealousies.

SALLY. Let 'im bust hissen, then, for owt I cares.

1ST HAYMAKER. Well but, as I said afoor, it be the last loäd hoäm; do thou and thy sweet'art sing us hoäm to supper—'The Last Loäd Hoäm.'

ALL. Ay! 'The Last Loäd Hoäm.'

*Song*

What did ye do, and what did ye saäy,  
Wi' the wild white rose, an' the woodbine sa  
gaäy,  
An' the midders all mow'd, an' the sky sa blue—  
What did ye saäy, and what did ye do,  
When ye thowt there were nawbody watchin'  
o' you,  
And you an' your Sally was forkin' the haäy,  
At the end of the daäy,  
For the last loäd hoäm?

What did we do, and what did we saäy,  
Wi' the briar sa green, an' the willer sa graäy,  
An' the midders all mow'd, an' the sky sa blue—  
Do ye think I be gawin' to tell it to you,  
What we mowt saäy, and what we mowt do,  
When me an' my Sally was forkin' the haäy,  
At the end of the daäy,  
For the last loäd hoäm ?

But what did ye saäy, and what did ye do,  
Wi' the butterflies out, and the swallers at plaäy,  
An' the midders all mow'd, an' the sky sa blue ?  
Why, coom then, owd feller, I'll tell it to you ;  
For me an' my Sally we sweär'd to be true,  
To be true to each other, let 'appen what maäy,  
Till the end of the daäy  
And the last loäd hoäm.

ALL. Well sung !

JAMES. Fanny be the naäme i' the song, but  
I swopt it fur *she*. [Pointing to SALLY.]

SALLY. Let ma aloän afoor foälk, wilt tha ?

1ST HAYMAKER. Ye shall sing that ageän  
to-night, fur owd Dobson 'll gi'e us a bit o'  
supper.

SALLY. I weänt goä to owd Dobson ; he wur  
rude to me i' tha haäyfield, and he'll be rude to  
me ageän to-night. Owd Steer's gotten all his  
grass down and wants a hand, and I'll goä to him.

1ST HAYMAKER. Owd Steer gi'es nubbut  
cowl tea to 'is men, and owd Dobson gi'es beer.

SALLY. But I'd like owd Steer's cowl tea better nor Dobson's beer. Good-bye. [*Going.*]

JAMES. Gi'e us a buss fust, lass.

SALLY. I tell'd tha to let ma aloän !

JAMES. Why, wasn't thou and me a-bussin' o' one another t'other side o' the haäycock, when owd Dobson coom'd upo' us? I can't let tha aloän if I would, Sally. [*Offering to kiss her.*]

SALLY. Git along wi' ye, do ! [*Exit.*  
[*All laugh ; exeunt singing.*]

‘ To be true to each other, let ’appen what maäy,  
Till the end o’ the daäy  
An’ the last löä hoäm.’

*Enter HAROLD*

HAROLD. Not Harold ! ‘ Philip Edgar,  
Philip Edgar !’

Her phantom call'd me by the name she loved.  
I told her I should hear her from the grave.  
Ay ! yonder is her casement. I remember  
Her bright face beaming starlike down upon me  
Thro' that rich cloud of blossom. Since I left her  
Here weeping, I have ranged the world, and sat  
Thro' every sensual course of that full feast  
That leaves but emptiness.

*Song*

‘ To be true to each other, let ’appen what maäy,  
To the end o’ the daäy  
An’ the last löä hoäm.’



HAROLD. Poor Eva ! O my God, if man be  
only

A willy-nilly current of sensations—  
Reaction needs must follow revel—yet—  
Why feel remorse, he, knowing that he *must* have  
Moved in the iron grooves of Destiny ?  
Remorse then is a part of Destiny,  
Nature a liar, making us feel guilty  
Of her own faults.

My grandfather—of him  
They say, that women—

O this mortal house,  
Which we are born into, is haunted by  
The ghosts of the dead passions of dead men ;  
And these take flesh again with our own flesh,  
And bring us to confusion.

He was only  
A poor philosopher who call'd the mind  
Of children a blank page, a *tabula rasa*.  
There, there, is written in invisible inks  
'Lust, Prodigality, Covetousness, Craft,  
Cowardice, Murder'—and the heat and fire  
Of life will bring them out, and black enough,  
So the child grow to manhood : better death  
With our first wail than life—

*Song (further off)*

'Till the end o' the daäy  
An' the last loäd hoäm,  
Loäd hoäm.'

ACT II      THE PROMISE OF MAY

This bridge again !    (*Steps on the bridge.*)

How often have I stood  
With Eva here !    The brook among its flowers !  
Forget-me-not, meadowsweet, willow-herb.  
I had some smattering of science then,  
Taught her the learned names, anatomized  
The flowers for her—and now I only wish  
This pool were deep enough, that I might plunge  
And lose myself for ever.

*Enter* DAN SMITH (*singing*)

Gee oop ! whoä !    Gee oop ! whoä !  
Scizzars an' Pumpy was good uns to goä  
    Thruf slush an' squad  
    When roäds was bad,  
But hallus ud stop at the Vine-an'-the-Hop,  
    Fur boäth on 'em knawed as well as mysen  
    That beer be as good fur 'erses as men.  
    Gee oop ! whoä !    Gee oop ! whoä !  
    Scizzars an' Pumpy was good uns to goä.

The beer's gotten oop into my 'eäd. S'iver  
I mun git along back to the farm, fur she tell'd  
ma to taäke the cart to Littlechester.

*Enter* DORA

Half an hour late ! why are you loitering  
here ?    Away with you at once.

[*Exit* DAN SMITH.]

*(Seeing HAROLD on bridge)*

Some madman, is it,  
Gesticulating there upon the bridge ?  
I am half afraid to pass.

HAROLD. Sometimes I wonder,  
When man has surely learnt at last that all  
His old-world faith, the blossom of his youth,  
Has faded, falling fruitless—whether then  
All of us, all at once, may not be seized  
With some fierce passion, not so much for  
Death

As against Life ! all, all, into the dark—  
No more !—and science now could drug and  
balm us

Back into nescience with as little pain  
As it is to fall asleep.

This beggarly life,  
This poor, flat, hedged-in field—no distance—  
this

Hollow Pandora-box,  
With all the pleasures flown, not even Hope  
Left at the bottom !

Superstitious fool,  
What brought me here ? To see her grave ?  
her ghost ?

Her ghost is everyway about me here.

DORA (*coming forward*). Allow me, sir, to  
pass you.

HAROLD. Eva !

DORA. Eva !

HAROLD. What are you? Where do you come from?

DORA. From the farm  
Here, close at hand.

HAROLD. Are you—you are—that Dora,  
The sister. I have heard of you. The likeness  
Is very striking.

DORA. You knew Eva, then?

HAROLD. Yes—I was thinking of her when  
—O yes,  
Many years back, and never since have met  
Her equal for pure innocence of nature,  
And loveliness of feature.

DORA. No, nor I.

HAROLD. Except, indeed, I have found it  
once again  
In your own self.

DORA. You flatter me. Dear Eva  
Was always thought the prettier.

HAROLD. And *her* charm  
Of voice is also yours; and I was brooding  
Upon a great unhappiness when you spoke.

DORA. Indeed, you seem'd in trouble, sir.

HAROLD. And you  
Seem my good angel who may help me from it.

DORA (*aside*). How worn he looks, poor  
man! who is it, I wonder.  
How can I help him? (*Aloud*.) Might I ask  
your name?

HAROLD. Harold.

DORA. I never heard her mention you.

HAROLD. I met her first at a farm in Cumberland—

Her uncle's.

DORA. She was there six years ago.

HAROLD. And if she never mention'd me, perhaps

The painful circumstances which I heard—

I will not vex you by repeating them—

Only last week at Littlechester, drove me

From out her memory. She has disappear'd,

They told me, from the farm—and darker news.

DORA. She has disappear'd, poor darling, from the world—

Left but one dreadful line to say, that we

Should find her in the river ; and we dragg'd

The Littlechester river all in vain :

Have sorrow'd for her all these years in vain.

And my poor father, utterly broken down

By losing her—she was his favourite child—

Has let his farm, all his affairs, I fear,

But for the slender help that I can give,

Fall into ruin. Ah ! that villain, Edgar,

If he should ever show his face among us,

Our men and boys would hoot him, stone him, hunt him

With pitchforks off the farm, for all of them

Loved her, and she was worthy of all love.

HAROLD. They say, we should forgive our enemies.

DORA. Ay, if the wretch were dead I might  
forgive him ;

We know not whether he be dead or living.

HAROLD. What Edgar ?

DORA. Philip Edgar of Toft Hall  
In Somerset. Perhaps you know him ?

HAROLD. Slightly.  
(*Aside.*) Ay, for how slightly have I known  
myself.

DORA. This Edgar, then, is living ?

HAROLD. Living ? well—  
One Philip Edgar of Toft Hall in Somerset  
Is lately dead.

DORA. Dead !—is there more than one ?

HAROLD. Nay—now—not one, (*aside*) for I  
am Philip Harold.

DORA. That one, is he then—dead !

HAROLD. (*Aside.*) My father's death,  
Let her believe it mine ; this, for the moment,  
Will leave me a free field.

DORA. Dead ! and this world  
Is brighter for his absence as that other  
Is darker for his presence.

HAROLD. Is not this  
To speak too pitilessly of the dead ?

DORA. My five-years' anger cannot die at  
once,  
Not all at once with death and him. I trust  
I shall forgive him—by-and-by—not now.  
O sir, you seem to have a heart ; if you  
Had seen us that wild morning when we found

Her bed unslept in, storm and shower lashing  
Her casement, her poor spaniel wailing for her,  
That desolate letter, blotted with her tears,  
Which told us we should never see her more—  
Our old nurse crying as if for her own child,  
My father stricken with his first paralysis,  
And then with blindness—had you been one  
of us

And seen all this, then you would know it is not  
So easy to forgive—even the dead.

HAROLD. But sure am I that of your gentleness

You will forgive him. She, you mourn for,  
seem'd

A miracle of gentleness—would not blur  
A moth's wing by the touching ; would not  
crush

The fly that drew her blood ; and, were she  
living,

Would not—if penitent—have denied him *her*  
Forgiveness. And perhaps the man himself,  
When hearing of that piteous death, has suffer'd  
More than we know. But wherefore waste  
your heart

In looking on a chill and changeless Past ?  
Iron will fuse, and marble melt ; the Past  
Remains the Past. But you are young, and—  
pardon me—

As lovely as your sister. Who can tell  
What golden hours, with what full hands, may be  
Waiting you in the distance ? Might I call

ACT II      THE PROMISE OF MAY

Upon your father—I have seen the world—  
And cheer his blindness with a traveller's tales ?

DORA. Call if you will, and when you will.

I cannot

Well answer for my father ; but if you  
Can tell me anything of our sweet Eva  
When in her brighter girlhood, I at least  
Will bid you welcome, and will listen to you.  
Now I must go.

HAROLD.                      But give me first your hand :  
I do not dare, like an old friend, to shake it.  
I kiss it as a prelude to that privilege  
When you shall know me better.

DORA. (*Aside.*)                      How beautiful  
His manners are, and how unlike the farmer's !  
You are staying here ?

HAROLD.                      Yes, at the wayside inn  
Close by that alder-island in your brook,  
'The Angler's Home.'

DORA.                      Are *you* one ?

HAROLD.                      No, but I  
Take some delight in sketching, and the country  
Has many charms, altho' the inhabitants  
Seem semi-barbarous.

DORA.                      I am glad it pleases you ;  
Yet I, born here, not only love the country,  
But its inhabitants too ; and you, I doubt not,  
Would take to them as kindly, if you cared  
To live some time among them.

HAROLD.                      If I did,  
Then one at least of its inhabitants



Might have more charm for me than all the country.

DORA. That one, then, should be grateful for your preference.

HAROLD. I cannot tell, tho' standing in her presence.

(*Aside.*) She colours !

DORA. Sir !

HAROLD. Be not afraid of me,  
For these are no conventional flourishes,  
I do most earnestly assure you that  
Your likeness——

*[Shouts and cries without.*

DORA. What was that ? my poor blind father——

*Enter FARMING MAN*

FARMING MAN. Miss Dora, Dan Smith's cart hes runned ower a laädy i' the holler laäne, and they ha' ta'en the body up inter your chaumber, and they be all a-callin' for ye.

DORA. The body !—Heavens ! I come !

HAROLD. But you are trembling.  
Allow me to go with you to the farm.

*[Exeunt.*

*Enter DOBSON*

DOBSON. What feller wur it as 'a' been a-talkin' fur haäfe an hour wi' my Dora ? (*Looking after him.*) Seeäms I ommost knaws the back

on 'im—drest like a gentleman, too. Damn all gentlemen, says I! I should ha' thowt they'd hed anew o' gentlefoälk, as I telled 'er to-daäy when she fell foul upo' me.

Minds ma o' summun. I could sweär to that; but that be all one, fur I haätes 'im afoor I knaws what 'e be. Theer! he turns round. Philip Hedgar o' Soomerset! Philip Hedgar o' Soomerset!—Noä—yeas—thaw the feller's gone and maäde such a litter of his faäce.

Eh lad, if it be thou, I'll Philip tha! a-plaäyin' the saäme gaäme wi' my Dora—I'll Soomerset tha.

I'd like to drag 'im thruff the herse-pond, and she to be a-lookin' at it. I'd like to leather 'im black and blue, and she to be a-laughin' at it. I'd like to fell 'im as deäd as a bullock! (*Clenching his fist.*)

But what 'ud she saäy to that? She telled me once not to meddle wi' 'im, and now she be fallen out wi' ma, and I can't coom at 'er.

It mun be *him*. Noä! Fur she'd niver 'a been talkin' haäfe an hour wi' the divil 'at killed her oän sister, or she beänt Dora Steer.

Y eas! Fur she niver knawed 'is faäce when 'e wur 'ere afoor; but I'll maäke 'er knaw! I'll maäke 'er knaw!

*Enter* HAROLD

Naäy, but I mun git out on 'is waäy now, or I shall be the death on 'im. [*Exit.*]

HAROLD. How the clown glared at me ! that  
Dobbins, is it,  
With whom I used to jar ? but can he trace me  
Thro' five years' absence, and my change of  
name,  
The tan of southern summers and the beard ?  
I may as well avoid him.

Ladylike !

Lilylike in her stateliness and sweetness !  
How came she by it ?—a daughter of the fields,  
This Dora !  
She gave her hand, unask'd, at the farm-gate ;  
I almost think she half return'd the pressure  
Of mine. What, I that held the orange blossom  
Dark as the yew ? but may not those, who march  
Before their age, turn back at times, and make  
Courtesy to custom ? and now the stronger  
motive,  
Misnamed free-will—the crowd would call it  
conscience—  
Moves me—to what ? I am dreaming ; for the  
past  
Look'd thro' the present, Eva's eyes thro' hers—  
A spell upon me ! Surely I loved Eva  
More than I knew ! or is it but the past  
That brightens in retiring ? Oh, last night,  
Tired, pacing my new lands at Littlechester,  
I dozed upon the bridge, and the black river  
Flow'd thro' my dreams—if dreams they were.  
She rose  
From the foul flood and pointed toward the farm,

And her cry rang to me across the years,  
'I call you, Philip Edgar, Philip Edgar!  
Come, you will set all right again, and father  
Will not die miserable.' I could make his age  
A comfort to him—so be more at peace  
With mine own self. Some of my former friends  
Would find my logic faulty; let them. Colour  
Flows thro' my life again, and I have lighted  
On a new pleasure. Anyhow we must  
Move in the line of least resistance when  
The stronger motive rules.

But she hates Edgar.

May not this Dobbins, or some other, spy  
Edgar in Harold? Well then, I must make her  
Love Harold first, and then she will forgive  
Edgar for Harold's sake. She said herself  
She would forgive him, by-and-by, not now—  
For her own sake *then*, if not for mine—not  
now  
But by-and-by.

*Enter DOBSON behind*

DOBSON. By-and-by—eh, lad, dosta know this  
paäper? Ye dropt it upo' the road. 'Philip  
Edgar, Esq.' Ay, you be a pretty squire.  
I ha' fun' ye out, I hev. Eh, lad, dosta know  
what tha meäns wi' by-and-by? Fur if ye be  
goin' to sarve our Dora as ye sarved our Eva—  
then, by-and-by, if she weänt listen to me when  
I be a-tryin' to saäve 'er—if she weänt—look to

thysen, for, by the Lord, I'd think na moor o' maäkin' an end o' tha nor a carrion craw—noä—thaw they hanged ma at 'Size fur it.

HAROLD. Dobbins, I think !

DOBSON. I beänt Dobbins.

HAROLD. Nor am I Edgar, my good fellow.

DOBSON. 'Tha lies ! What hasta been saäyin' to *my* Dora ?

HAROLD. I have been telling her of the death of one Philip Edgar of Toft Hall, Somerset.

DOBSON. 'Tha lies !

HAROLD (*pulling out a newspaper*). Well, my man, it seems that you can read. Look there—under the deaths.

DOBSON. 'O' the 17th, Philip Edgar, o' Toft Hall, Soomerset.' How coom thou to be sa like 'im, then ?

HAROLD. Naturally enough ; for I am closely related to the dead man's family.

DOBSON. An' ow, coom thou by the letter to 'im ?

HAROLD. Naturally again ; for as I used to transact all his business for him, I had to look over his letters. Now then, see these (*takes out letters*). Half a score of them, all directed to me—Harold.

DOBSON. 'Arold ! 'Arold ! 'Arold, so they be.

HAROLD. My name is Harold ! Good day, Dobbins !

[*Exit.*

DOBSON. 'Arold ! The feller's cleän daäzed, an' maäzed, an' maäted, an' muddled ma. Deäd !

It mun be true, fur it wur i' print as black as owt. Naäy, but 'Good daäy, Dobbins.' Why, that wur the very twang on 'im. Eh, lad, but whether thou be Hedgar, or Hedgar's business man, thou hesn't naw business 'ere wi' *my* Dora, as I knaws on, an' whether thou calls thysen Hedgar or Harold, if thou stick to she I'll stick to thee—stick to tha like a weasel to a rabbit, I will. Ay! and I'd like to shoot tha like a rabbit an' all. 'Good daäy, Dobbins.' Dang tha!

ACT III

SCENE.—A ROOM IN STEER'S HOUSE. DOOR  
LEADING INTO BEDROOM AT THE BACK.

DORA (*ringing a handbell*). Milly !

*Enter MILLY*

MILLY. The little 'ymn ? Yeäs, Miss ; but  
I wur so ta'en up wi' leädin' the owd man about  
all the blessed murnin' 'at I ha' nobbut larned  
mysen haäfe on it.

' O man, forgive thy mortal foe,  
Nor ever strike him blow for blow ;  
For all the souls on earth that live  
To be forgiven must forgive.  
Forgive him seventy times and seven ;  
For all the blessed souls in Heaven  
Are both forgivers and forgiven.'

But I'll git the book ageän, and larn mysen  
the rest, and saäy it to ye afoor dark ; ye ringed  
fur that, Miss, didn't ye ?

ACT III      THE PROMISE OF MAY

DORA. No, Milly; but if the farming-men be come for their wages, to send them up to me.

MILLY. Yeäs, Miss. [Exit.

DORA (*sitting at desk counting money*). Enough at any rate for the present. (*Enter FARMING MEN.*) Good afternoon, my friends. I am sorry Mr. Steer still continues too unwell to attend to you, but the schoolmaster looked to the paying you your wages when I was away, didn't he?

MEN. Yeäs; and thanks to ye.

DORA. Some of our workmen have left us, but he sent me an alphabetical list of those that remain, so, Allen, I may as well begin with you.

ALLEN (*with his hand to his ear*). Halfabitical! Taäke one o' the young 'uns fust, Miss, fur I be a bit deaf, and I wur hallus scaäred by a big word; leästwaäys, I should be wi' a lawyer.

DORA. I spoke of your names, Allen, as they are arranged here (*shows book*)—according to their first letters.

ALLEN. Letters! Yeas, I sees now. Them be what they larns the childer' at school, but I were burn afoor schoolin-time.

DORA. But, Allen, tho' you can't read, you could whitewash that cottage of yours where your grandson had the fever.

ALLEN. I'll hev it done o' Monday.

DORA. Else if the fever spread, the parish will have to thank you for it.

ALLEN. Meä? why, it be the Lord's doin',



noän o' mine ; d'ye think *I'd* gi'e 'em the fever? But I thanks ye all the saäme, Miss. (*Takes money.*)

DORA (*calling out names*). Higgins, Jackson, Luscombe, Nokes, Oldham, Skipworth! (*All take money.*) Did you find that you worked at all the worse upon the cold tea than you would have done upon the beer?

HIGGINS. Noä, Miss ; we worked naw wuss upo' the cowl tea ; but we'd ha' worked better upo' the beer.

DORA. Come, come, you worked well enough, and I am much obliged to all of you. There's for you, and you, and you. Count the money and see if it's all right.

MEN. All right, Miss ; and thank ye kindly.

[*Exeunt* LUSCOMBE, NOKES, OLDHAM, SKIPWORTH.]

DORA. Dan Smith, my father and I forgave you stealing our coals.

[DAN SMITH *advances to* DORA.]

DAN SMITH (*bellowing*). Whoy, O lor, Miss! that wur sa long back, and the walls sa thin, and the winders brokken, and the weather sa cowl, and my missus a-gittin' ower 'er lyin'-in.

DORA. Didn't I say that we had forgiven you? But, Dan Smith, they tell me that you—and you have six children—spent all your last Saturday's wages at the ale-house ; that you were stupid drunk all Sunday, and so ill in consequence all Monday, that you did not come into the

ACT III      THE PROMISE OF MAY

hayfield. Why should I pay you your full wages ?

DAN SMITH. I be ready to taäke the pledge.

DORA. And as ready to break it again. Besides it was you that were driving the cart—and I fear you were tipsy then, too—when you lamed the lady in the hollow lane.

DAN SMITH (*bellowing*). O lor, Miss ! noä, noä, noä ! Ye sees the holler laäne be hallus sa dark i' the arternoon, and wheere the big eshtree cuts athurt it, it gi'es a turn like, and 'ow should I see to laäme the laädy, and meä coomin' along pretty sharp an' all ?

DORA. Well, there are your wages ; the next time you waste them at a pothouse you get no more from me. (*Exit DAN SMITH.*) Sally Allen, you worked for Mr. Dobson, didn't you ?

SALLY (*advancing*). Yeäs, Miss ; but he wur so rough wi' ma, I couldn't abide 'im.

DORA. Why should he be rough with you ? You are as good as a man in the hayfield. What's become of your brother ?

SALLY. 'Listed for a soädger, Miss, i' the Queen's Real Hard Tillery.

DORA. And your sweetheart—when are you and he to be married ?

SALLY. At Michaelmas, Miss, please God.

DORA. You are an honest pair. I will come to your wedding.

SALLY. An' I thanks ye fur that, Miss, moor nor fur the waäge.

(*Going—returns.*) 'A cotched ma about the waaist, Miss, when 'e wur 'ere afoor, an' axed ma to be 'is little sweet-art, an soä I knaw'd 'im when I seed 'im ageän an I telled feyther on 'im.

DORA. What is all this, Allen?

ALLEN. Why, Miss Dora, meä and my maätes, us three, we wants to hev three words wi' ye.

HIGGINS. That be 'im, and meä, Miss.

JACKSON. An' meä, Miss.

ALLEN. An' we weänt mention naw naämes, we'd as lief talk o' the Divil afoor ye as 'im, fur they says the master goäs cleän off his 'eäd when he 'eärs the naäme on 'im; but us three, arter Sally'd telled us on 'im, we fun' 'im out a-walkin' i' West Field wi' a white 'at, nine o'clock, upo' Tuesday murnin', and all on us, wi' your leave, we wants to leather 'im.

DORA. Who?

ALLEN. Him as did the mischief here, five year' sin'.

DORA. Mr. Edgar?

ALLEN. Theer, Miss! You ha' naämed 'im—not me.

DORA. He's dead, man—dead; gone to his account—dead and buried.

ALLEN. I beänt sa sewer o' that, fur Sally knaw'd 'im; Now then?

DORA. Yes; it was in the Somersetshire papers.

ALLEN. Then yon mun be his brother, an' we'll leather 'im.

DORA. I never heard that he had a brother. Some foolish mistake of Sally's; but what! would you beat a man for his brother's fault? That were a wild justice indeed. Let bygones be bygones. Go home! Good-night! (*All exeunt.*) I have once more paid them all. The work of the farm will go on still, but for how long? We are almost at the bottom of the well: little more to be drawn from it—and what then? Encumbered as we are, who would lend us anything? We shall have to sell all the land, which Father, for a whole life, has been getting together, again, and that, I am sure, would be the death of him. What am I to do? Farmer Dobson, were I to marry him, has promised to keep our heads above water; and the man has doubtless a good heart, and a true and lasting love for me: yet—though I can be sorry for him—as the good Sally says, ‘I can’t abide him’—almost brutal, and matched with my Harold is like a hedge thistle by a garden rose. But then, he, too—will he ever be of one faith with his wife? which is my dream of a true marriage. Can I fancy him kneeling with me, and uttering the same prayer; standing up side by side with me, and singing the same hymn? I fear not. Have I done wisely, then, in accepting him? But may not a girl’s love-dream have too much romance in it to be realised all at once, or altogether, or anywhere but in Heaven? And yet I had once a vision of a pure and perfect

# THE PROMISE OF MAY ACT III

marriage, where the man and the woman, only differing as the stronger and the weaker, should walk hand in hand together down this valley of tears, as they call it so truly, to the grave at the bottom, and lie down there together in the darkness which would seem but for a moment, to be wakened again together by the light of the resurrection, and no more partings for ever and for ever. (*Walks up and down. She sings.*)

‘O happy lark, that warblest high  
 Above thy lowly nest,  
 O brook, that brawlest merrily by  
 Thro’ fields that once were blest,  
 O tower spiring to the sky,  
 O graves in daisies drest,  
 O Love and Life, how weary am I,  
 And how I long for rest.’

There, there, I am a fool! Tears! I have sometimes been moved to tears by a chapter of fine writing in a novel; but what have I to do with tears now? All depends on me—Father, this poor girl, the farm, everything; and they both love me—I am all in all to both; and he loves me too, I am quite sure of that. Courage, courage! and all will go well. (*Goes to bedroom door; opens it.*) How dark your room is! Let me bring you in here where there is still full daylight. (*Brings EVA forward.*) Why, you look better.

EVA. And I feel so much better, that I trust I may be able by-and-by to help you in the business of the farm ; but I must not be known yet. Has anyone found me out, Dora ?

DORA. Oh, no ; you kept your veil too close for that when they carried you in ; since then, no one has seen you but myself.

EVA. Yes—this Milly.

DORA. Poor blind Father's little guide, Milly, who came to us three years after you were gone, how should she know you ? But now that you have been brought to us as it were from the grave, dearest Eva, and have been here so long, will you not speak with Father to-day ?

EVA. Do you think that I may ? No, not yet. I am not equal to it yet.

DORA. Why ? Do you still suffer from your fall in the hollow lane ?

EVA. Bruised ; but no bones broken.

DORA. I have always told Father that the huge old ashtree there would cause an accident some day ; but he would never cut it down, because one of the Steers had planted it there in former times.

EVA. If it had killed one of the Steers there the other day, it might have been better for her, for him, and for you.

DORA. Come, come, keep a good heart ! Better for me ! That's good. How better for me ?

EVA. You tell me you have a lover. Will

he not fly from you if he learn the story of my shame and that I am still living ?

DORA. No ; I am sure that when we are married he will be willing that you and Father should live with us ; for, indeed, he tells me that he met you once in the old times, and was much taken with you, my dear.

EVA. Taken with me ; who was he ? Have you told him I am here ?

DORA. No ; do you wish it ?

EVA. See, Dora ; you yourself are ashamed of me (*weeps*), and I do not wonder at it.

DORA. But I should wonder at myself if it were so. Have we not been all in all to one another from the time when we first peeped into the bird's nest, waded in the brook, ran after the butterflies, and prattled to each other that we would marry fine gentlemen, and played at being fine ladies ?

EVA. That last was my Father's fault, poor man. And this lover of yours—this Mr. Harold—is a gentleman ?

DORA. That he is, from head to foot. I do believe I lost my heart to him the very first time we met, and I love him so much—

EVA. Poor Dora !

DORA. That I dare not tell him how much I love him.

EVA. Better not. Has he offered you marriage, this gentleman ?

DORA. Could I love him else ?

ACT III      THE PROMISE OF MAY

EVA. And are you quite sure that after marriage this gentleman will not be shamed of his poor farmer's daughter among the ladies in his drawing-room?

DORA. Shamed of me in a drawing-room! Wasn't Miss Vavasour, our schoolmistress at Littlechester, a lady born? Were not our fellow-pupils all ladies? Wasn't dear mother herself at least by one side a lady? Can't I speak like a lady; pen a letter like a lady; talk a little French like a lady; play a little like a lady? Can't a girl when she loves her husband, and he her, make herself anything he wishes her to be? Shamed of me in a drawing-room, indeed! See here! 'I hope your Lordship is quite recovered of your gout?' (*Curtsies.*) 'Will your Ladyship ride to cover to-day?' (*Curtsies.*) 'I can recommend our Voltigeur.' 'I am sorry that we could not attend your Grace's party on the 10th!' (*Curtsies.*) There, I am glad my nonsense has made you smile!

EVA. I have heard that 'your Lordship,' and 'your Ladyship,' and 'your Grace' are all growing old-fashioned!

DORA. But the love of sister for sister can never be old-fashioned. I have been unwilling to trouble you with questions, but you seem somewhat better to-day. We found a letter in your bedroom torn into bits. I couldn't make it out. What was it?

EVA. From him! from him! He said we



had been most happy together, and he trusted that some time we should meet again, for he had not forgotten his promise to come when I called him. But that was a mockery, you know, for he gave me no address, and there was no word of marriage; and, O Dora, he signed himself 'Yours gratefully'—fancy, Dora, 'gratefully'! 'Yours gratefully'!

DORA. Infamous wretch! (*Aside.*) Shall I tell her he is dead? No; she is still too feeble.

EVA. Hark! Dora, some one is coming. I cannot and I will not see anybody.

DORA. It is only Milly.

*Enter MILLY, with basket of roses*

DORA. Well, Milly, why do you come in so roughly? The sick lady here might have been asleep.

MILLY. Pleäse, Miss, Mr. Dobson telled me to saäy he's browt some of Miss Eva's roses for the sick laädy to smell on.

DORA. Take them, dear. Say that the sick lady thanks him! Is he here?

MILLY. Yeäs, Miss; and he wants to speak to ye partic'lar.

DORA. Tell him I cannot leave the sick lady just yet.

MILLY. Yeäs, Miss; but he says he wants to tell ye summut very partic'lar.

DORA. Not to-day. What are you staying for?

MILLY. Why, Miss, I be afeard I shall set him a-sweäring like onythink.

DORA. And what harm will that do you, so that you do not copy his bad manners? Go, child. (*Exit MILLY.*) But, Eva, why did you write ‘Seek me at the bottom of the river’?

EVA. Why? because I meant it!—that dreadful night! that lonely walk to Littlechester, the rain beating in my face all the way, dead midnight when I came upon the bridge; the river, black, slimy, swirling under me in the lamplight, by the rotten wharfs—but I was so mad, that I mounted upon the parapet——

DORA. You make me shudder!

EVA. To fling myself over, when I heard a voice, ‘Girl, what are you doing there?’ It was a Sister of Mercy, come from the death-bed of a pauper, who had died in his misery blessing God, and the Sister took me to her house, and bit by bit—for she promised secrecy—I told her all.

DORA. And what then?

EVA. She would have persuaded me to come back here, but I couldn’t. Then she got me a place as nursery governess, and when the children grew too old for me, and I asked her once more to help me, once more she said, ‘Go home’; but I hadn’t the heart or face to do it. And then—what would Father say? I sank so low that I went into service—the drudge of a lodging-house—and when the mistress died, and

# THE PROMISE OF MAY ACT III

I appealed to the Sister again, her answer—I think I have it about me—yes, there it is !

DORA (*reads*). ‘My dear Child,—I can do no more for you. I have done wrong in keeping your secret ; your Father must be now in extreme old age. Go back to him and ask his forgiveness before he dies.—SISTER AGATHA.’ Sister Agatha is right. Don’t you long for Father’s forgiveness !

EVA. I would almost die to have it !

DORA. And he may die before he gives it ; may drop off any day, any hour. You must see him at once. (*Rings bell. Enter MILLY.*) Milly, my dear, how did you leave Mr. Steer ?

MILLY. He’s been a-moänin’ and a-groänin’ in ’is sleep, but I thinks he be wakkenin’ oop.

DORA. Tell him that I and the lady here wish to see him. You see she is lamed, and cannot go down to him.

MILLY. Yeäs, Miss, I will. [*Exit MILLY.*]

DORA. I ought to prepare you. You must not expect to find our Father as he was five years ago. He is much altered ; but I trust that your return—for you know, my dear, you were always his favourite—will give him, as they say, a new lease of life.

EVA (*clinging to DORA*). Oh, Dora, Dora !

*Enter STEER led by MILLY*

STEER. Hes the cow cawved ?

DORA. No, Father.

STEER. Be the colt deäð?

DORA. No, Father.

STEER. He wur sa bellows'd out wi' the wind this murnin', 'at I tell'd 'em to gallop 'im. Be he deäð?

DORA. Not that I know.

STEER. What hasta sent fur me, then, fur?

DORA (*taking STEER's arm*). Well, Father, I have a surprise for you.

STEER. I ha niver been surprised but once i' my life, and I went blind upon it.

DORA. Eva has come home.

STEER. Hoäm? fro' the bottom o' the river?

DORA. No, Father, that was a mistake. She's here again.

STEER. The Steers was all gentlefoälks i' the owd times, an' I worked early an' laäte to maäke 'em all gentlefoälks ageän. The land belonged to the Steers i' the owd times, an' it belongs to the Steers ageän: I bowt it back ageän; but I couldn't buy my darter back ageän when she lost hersen, could I? I eddicated boäth on 'em to marry gentlemen, an' one on 'em went an' lost hersen i' the river.

DORA. No, Father, she's here.

STEER. Here! she moänt coom here. What would her mother säy? If it be her ghoäst, we mun abide it. We can't keep a ghoäst out.

EVA (*falling at his feet*). O forgive me! forgive me!

# THE PROMISE OF MAY ACT III

STEER. Who said that? Taäke me awaäy, little gell. It be one o' my bad daäys.

[Exit STEER led by MILLY.

DORA (*smoothing EVA's forehead*). Be not so cast down, my sweet Eva. You heard him say it was one of his bad days. He will be sure to know you to-morrow.

EVA. It is almost the last of my bad days, I think. I am very faint. I must lie down. Give me your arm. Lead me back again.

[DORA takes EVA into inner room.

*Enter MILLY*

MILLY. Miss Dora! Miss Dora!

DORA (*returning and leaving the bedroom door ajar*). Quiet! quiet! What is it?

MILLY. Mr. 'Arold, Miss.

DORA. Below?

MILLY. Yeäs, Miss. He be saäyin' a word to the owd man, but he'll coom up if ye let's 'im.

DORA. Tell him, then, that I'm waiting for him.

MILLY. Yeäs, Miss.

[Exit. DORA sits pensively and waits.

*Enter HAROLD*

HAROLD. You are pale, my Dora! but the ruddiest cheek  
That ever charm'd the plowman of your wolds

Might wish its rose a lily, could it look  
But half as lovely. I was speaking with  
Your father, asking his consent—you wish'd me—  
That we should marry : he would answer nothing,  
I could make nothing of him ; but, my flower,  
You look so weary and so worn ! What is it  
Has put you out of heart ?

DORA. It puts me in heart  
Again to see you ; but indeed the state  
Of my poor father puts me out of heart.  
Is yours yet living ?

HAROLD. No—I told you.

DORA. When ?

HAROLD. Confusion !—Ah well, well ! the  
state we all

Must come to in our spring-and-winter world  
If we live long enough ! and poor Steer looks  
The very type of Age in a picture, bow'd  
To the earth he came from, to the grave he  
goes to,  
Beneath the burthen of years.

DORA. More like the picture  
Of Christian in my 'Pilgrim's Progress' here,  
Bow'd to the dust beneath the burthen of sin.

HAROLD. Sin ! What sin ?

DORA. Not his own.

HAROLD. That nursery-tale  
Still read, then ?

DORA. Yes ; our carters and our shepherds  
Still find a comfort there.

HAROLD. Carters and shepherds !

# THE PROMISE OF MAY ACT III

DORA. Scorn ! I hate scorn. A soul with  
no religion—

My mother used to say that such a one  
Was without rudder, anchor, compass—might be  
Blown everyway with every gust and wreck  
On any rock ; and tho' you are good and gentle,  
Yet if thro' any want—

HAROLD. Of this religion ?  
Child, read a little history, you will find  
The common brotherhood of man has been  
Wrong'd by the cruelties of his religions  
More than could ever have happen'd thro' the  
want  
Of any or all of them.

DORA. —But, O dear friend,  
If thro' the want of any—I mean the true one—  
And pardon me for saying it—you should ever  
Be tempted into doing what might seem  
Not altogether worthy of you, I think  
That I should break my heart, for you have  
taught me  
To love you.

HAROLD. What is this ? some one been  
stirring  
Against me ? he, your rustic amourist,  
The polish'd Damon of your pastoral here,  
This Dobson of your idyll ?

DORA. No, Sir, no !  
Did you not tell me he was crazed with jealousy,  
Had threaten'd ev'n your life, and would say  
anything ?

ACT III

# THE PROMISE OF MAY

Did *I* not promise not to listen to him,  
Nor ev'n to see the man?

HAROLD.                      Good ; then what is it  
That makes you talk so dolefully ?

DORA. I told you—  
My father. Well, indeed, a friend just now,  
One that has been much wrong'd, whose griefs  
are mine.

Was warning me that if a gentleman  
Should wed a farmer's daughter, he would be  
Sooner or later shamed of her among  
The ladies, born his equals.

HAROLD. More fool he !  
What I that have been call'd a Socialist,  
A Communist, a Nihilist—what you will !——

DORA. What are all these ?

HAROLD. Utopian idiotcies.  
They did not last three Junes. Such rampant weeds  
Strangle each other, die, and make the soil  
For Cæsars, Cromwells, and Napoleons  
To root their power in. I have freed myself  
From all such dreams, and some will say because  
I have inherited my Uncle. Let them.  
But—shamed of you, my Empress! I should prize  
The pearl of Beauty, even if I found it  
Dark with the soot of slums.

DORA. But I can tell you,  
We Steers are of old blood, tho' we be fallen.  
See there our shield. (*Pointing to arms on mantel-  
piece.*)

For I have heard the Steers



# THE PROMISE OF MAY ACT III

Had land in Saxon times ; and your own name  
Of Harold sounds so English and so old  
I am sure you must be proud of it.

HAROLD. Not I !

As yet I scarcely feel it mine. I took it  
For some three thousand acres. I have land  
now

And wealth, and lay both at your feet.

DORA. And *what* was  
Your name before ?

HAROLD. Come, come, my girl, enough  
Of this strange talk. I love you and you me.  
True, I have held opinions, hold some still,  
Which you would scarce approve of : for all  
that,

I am a man not prone to jealousies,  
Caprices, humours, moods ; but very ready  
To make allowances, and mighty slow  
To feel offences. Nay, I do believe  
I could forgive—well, almost anything—  
And that more freely than your formal priest,  
Because I know more fully than *he* can  
What poor earthworms are all and each of us,  
Here crawling in this boundless Nature. Dora,  
If marriage ever brought a woman happiness  
I doubt not I can make you happy.

DORA. You make me  
Happy already.

HAROLD. And I never said  
As much before to any woman living.

DORA. No ?

ACT III      THE PROMISE OF MAY

HAROLD. No ! by this true kiss, *you* are the first

I ever have loved truly.      [*They kiss each other.*]

EVA (*with a wild cry*). Philip Edgar !

HAROLD. The phantom cry ! *You*—did *you* hear a cry ?

DORA. She must be crying out ‘Edgar’ in her sleep.

HAROLD. Who must be crying out ‘Edgar’ in her sleep ?

DORA. Your pardon for a minute. She must be waked.

HAROLD. Who must be waked ?

DORA. I am not deaf: you fright me. What ails you ?

HAROLD. Speak.

DORA. You know her, Eva.

HAROLD. Eva !

[*EVA opens the door and stands in the entry.*]

She !

EVA. Make her happy, then, and I forgive you.      [*Falls dead.*]

DORA. Happy ! What ? Edgar ? Is it so ? Can it be ?

They told me so. Yes, yes ! I see it all now.

O she has fainted. Sister, Eva, sister !

He is yours again—he will love *you* again ;

I give him back to you again. Look up !

One word, or do but smile ! Sweet, do you hear me ?

[*Puts her hand on EVA’s heart.*]

ACT III

Broken at last—all still—and nothing left

To live for. [Falls on body of her sister.

HAROLD. Living . . . dead . . . She said  
‘all still.

Nothing to live for.'

She—she knows me—now . . .

(A pause)

She knew me from the first, she juggled with me,  
She hid this sister, told me she was dead—

I have wasted pity on her—not dead now—

No ! acting, playing on me, both of them.

*They* drag the river for her ! no, not they !

Playing on me—not dead now—a swoon—a scene—

Yet—how she made her wail as for the dead !

*Enter MILLY*

MILLY. Please, Mister 'Arold.

HAROLD (*roughly*). Well?

MILLY. The owd man's coom'd ageän to  
'issen, an' wants

To hev a word wi' ye about the marriage.

HAROLD. The what?

MILLY.                   The marriage.

HAROLD.                    The marriage?

MILLY. Yeäs, the marriage.

Granny says marriages be maade i' 'eaven.

ACT III      THE PROMISE OF MAY

HAROLD. She lies ! They are made in Hell.

Child, can't you see?

Tell them to fly for a doctor.

MILLY.

O law—yeäs, Sir !

I'll run fur 'im mysen.

[Exit.

HAROLD.

All silent there,

Yes, deathlike ! Dead ? I dare not look : if  
dead.

Were it best to steal away, to spare myself,  
And her too, pain, pain, pain ?

My curse on all

This world of mud, on all its idiot gleams

Of pleasure, all the foul fatalities

That blast our natural passions into pains !

*Enter DOBSON*

DOBSON. You, Master Hedgar, Harold, or  
whativer

They calls ye, for I warrants that ye goäs

By haäfe a scoor o' naämes—out o' the chaumber.

[*Dragging him past the body.*]

HAROLD. Not that way, man! Curse on  
your brutal strength!

I cannot pass that way.

DOBSON.

Out o' the chaumber !

I'll mash tha into nowt.

HAROLD.

The mere wild-beast !

DOBSON. Out o' the chaumber, dang tha !

HAROLD.

Lout, churl, clown !

THE PROMISE OF MAY      ACT III

[*While they are shouting and struggling DORA rises and comes between them.*]

DORA (*to DOBSON*). Peace, let him be : it is the chamber of Death !

Sir, you are tenfold more a gentleman,  
A hundred times more worth a woman's love,  
Than this, this—but I waste no words upon him :  
His wickedness is like my wretchedness—  
Beyond all language.

(*To HAROLD*)

You—you see her there !  
Only fifteen when first you came on her,  
And then the sweetest flower of all the wolds,  
So lovely in the promise of her May,  
So winsome in her grace and gaiety,  
So loved by all the village people here,  
So happy in herself and in her home——

DOBSON (*agitated*). Theer, theer ! ha' done.  
I can't abear to see her. [*Exit.*]

DORA. A child, and all as trustful as a child !  
Five years of shame and suffering broke the heart  
That only beat for you ; and he, the father,  
Thro' that dishonour which you brought upon  
us,

Has lost his health, his eyesight, even his mind.

HAROLD (*covering his face*). Enough !

DORA. It seem'd so ; only there was left  
A second daughter, and to her you came  
Veiling one sin to act another.

HAROLD.

No !

You wrong me there ! hear, hear me ! I wish'd,  
if you—— [Pauses.

DORA. If I—

HAROLD. Could love me, could be brought  
to love me

As I loved you——

DORA. What then?

HAROLD. I wish'd, I hoped

To make, to make——

DORA. *What did you hope to make?*

HAROLD. 'Twere best to make an end of my  
lost life.

O Dora, Dora !

DORA. *What* did you hope to make?

HAROLD. Make, make! I cannot find the word—forgive it—

Amends.

DORA. For what? to whom?

HAROLD. To him, to you !  
[*Falling at her feet.*]

DORA. To *him* ! to *me* !

No, not with all your wealth,  
Your land, your life ! Out in the fiercest storm  
That ever made earth tremble—he, nor I—  
The shelter of *your* roof—not for one moment—  
Nothing from *you* !

Sunk in the deepest pit of pauperism,  
Push'd from all doors as if we bore the plague,  
Smitten with fever in the open field,  
Laid famine-stricken at the gates of Death—  
Nothing from you !

THE PROMISE OF MAY      ACT III

But she there—her last word  
Forgave—and I forgive you. If you ever  
Forgive yourself, you are even lower and baser  
Than even I can well believe you. Go !

*[He lies at her feet. Curtain falls.]*

END OF VOL. XI







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